

# The distant coffee partners

– Bilateral relationship between Finland and Colombia 1950-2018

Maikki Järvi

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| <p>Tutkin Suomen ja Kolumbian kahdenvälisiä suhteita. Muodostan kronologisen selvityksen suhteiden kulusta vuosina 1950-2018 ja perustan analyysin sille oletukselle, että molemmat maat rakentavat ulkopoliittikkansa liberaalin koulukunnan ajatuksille. Tutkimuskysymykseni ovat: Miten hyvin Kolumbian ja Suomen kahdenväliset suhteet heijastavat maiden virallista ulkopoliittista narratiivia? Miksi kaupallisten suhteiden koko potentiaalia ei ole onnistuttu hyödyntämään? Miltä kahdenvälisen suhteiden tulevaisuus näyttää?</p> <p>Käytän tutkimuksessa menetelmänä narratiivista historian tutkimusta. Menetelmän tavoitteena on luoda erilaisista lähteistä kootulla aineistolla koherentti narratiivi, joka heijastaa kolumbialaista ja suomalaista historiaa ja politiikka kokonaisvaltaisemmin. Käytetyt aineistot tulevat pääasiassa Ulkoministeriön arkistoista, kirjallisuudesta ja temaattisista haastatteluista. Aineiston analyysissä hyödynnän kvalitatiivista lähestymistapaa.</p> <p>Kolumbia ja Suomen taloudelliset suhteet luotiin 1940-luvulla, diplomaattisuhteet 1954. Kauppa eteni ensin valuuttakompensaatiokaupan kautta. Kauppatase oli kroonisesti epäedullinen Suomelle ja tilanne pysyi melko samana 1980-luvulla asti, jolloin molemmat maat avasivat diplomaattiset edustustot. Äärimmäinen väkivalta Kolumbiassa ja paha talouslama Suomessa saivat Suomen sulkemaan edustustonsa 1993. Kolumbia teki samoin vuonna 2002. Seuraavien vuosien aikana suhteissa tapahtui muutos rauhanvälityksen ja konfliktinratkaisun noustessa Suomen ulkopoliittikan keskiöön myös Kolumbiassa. Suomi avasi Bogotan yhteystoimiston Limaan 2013 ja Kolumbia uudelleenavasi lähetystön 2014. Suomi seurasi esimerkkiä 2017.</p> <p>Maiden kahdenväliset suhteet heijastavat maiden virallista ulkopoliittista narratiivia melko hyvin. Laajalle levinnyt väkivalta ja huumekauppa sekä niiden vaikutukset Kolumbian taloudelliseen kapasiteettiin yhdessä Suomen ulkopoliittikan kanssa vaikeuttivat suhteiden taloudellisen potentiaalin hyödyntämistä. Nyt tulevaisuus näyttää positiiviselta. Yhteistyö ja jaetut kiinnostuksen kohteet ovat kasvussa. Suhteita hankaloittaneet tekijät ovat vähentyneet.</p> <p>Tapaustutkimus Kolumbian ja Suomen suhteista tarjoaa tavan tarkastella kummankin maan laajempia poliittisia suuntauksia. Lähdeaineisto antaa kuvan kunkin historiallisen aikakauden politiikasta ja taloudellisesta kehityksestä ja suurempi poliittinen konteksti heijastuu näistä yksityiskohdista. Tutkimukseni on ensimmäinen kronologinen kuvaus Suomen ja Kolumbian kahdenvälisen suhteiden historiasta.</p> |  |  |  |
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# 1. Introduction

The official relationship between Finland and Colombia is turning 65 years this year. Today, in 2019, thanks to the global world, the two countries are perhaps closer to each other than ever before because of the new means of communications that facilitate the interconnectedness across the Atlantic Ocean. Despite the long physical distance, Colombian music, culture and peoples have reached the cold and distant country in the North and, equally, after the ending of the decades long conflict in Colombia, the interest towards Colombia is also growing in Finland. Politically the two countries which seem to have little in common are also finding mutual interests especially through economic cooperation.

The aim of this thesis is to review the bilateral relationship between Finland and Colombia. The bilateral relationship will be analysed primarily with focus on the official diplomatic relationship between the two countries. This is done through especially the economic ties, as these has been the most relevant historically in the bilateral relations. This thesis theoretically reviews the political and economic development of the two countries with emphasis on both their historical contexts and the influence of the particularities of each state on the evolution of the bilateral relations. A discussion on how the bilateral ties reflect the general foreign policy narrative of the countries will be provided and some consideration is also given to the possible future development of the relations. The reason why the narrative can be considered relevant for conducting a historical analysis through the bilateral relations is that it gives an idea of why certain things became relevant for each country in question in certain points during their history and how these changes can be seen reflected in the context of this case study. The examples in Finno-Colombian relationships thus help to identify larger trends in the historical narrative and demonstrate the practical applications of the countries' foreign policy trends at different times.

The timeline of this research is 1950 - 2018. This period was chosen because the start of 1960, after the diplomatic relations were established in 1954, is a point in time in which the contact between Colombia and Finland became more active, largely due to the growing coffee trade. Even though there was clear variation in the propinquity of

the relationship during the decades, there has never been a clear cut off point to the bilateral relations and thus the whole time-period chosen can be considered relevant for analysis.

## 2. Theory and Method

### 2.1 Liberal school of international relations

According to Alasuutari, theoretical framework can mean a specifically defined point of view (Alasuutari, 2011, p. 79). In this research the theoretical framework is formed by political theory on international relations. The bilateral relationships will be considered in the larger context of world politics and even though a deeper analysis in the motivation of each actor outside the bilateral relations is not given, the general ideas of liberal school of thought are considered to be valid when constructing the political time series of the relations.

Liberal school of international relations is based on the emphasis of international cooperation and mutual benefits over power politics<sup>1</sup> and implementation of international organizations and nongovernmental actors for shaping policy choices. Contrary to realism it emphasizes cooperation over conflict in which international trade and democracy are important tools in interconnectivity.

When conducting the analysis of the bilateral relations, it is considered that both countries are liberal democracies, which supposedly base their foreign policies on the ideas of international trade, cooperation and organisations. This being the case, the historical timeline will be analysed through the assumption that the policy choices of both countries show tendencies associated with the liberal school of thought. Conclusions whether this will prove to be true will be given in the end. Great importance is also given to the commercial connection and bilateral trade, as this has been the foundation of the relationship between the two countries.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Lemke (2009) an idea that “*distribution of power and resources or changes to those distributions, are fundamental causes of war and of system stability*”.

The relations could have also been analysed by using realism<sup>2</sup>, but it can be considered that, since Colombia nor Finland are global superpowers and exist in vastly different geopolitical regions without real competition for influence or power as such, this analysis does not feel adequate when attempting to undertake a case study on the relationship between these two countries.

Equally, the analysis could have been constructed through structural and post-structural theories by taking into account the global system of politics which produces the countries' foreign policies as well as the cultural and linguistic traditions of each country and its relations with others, but as the purpose of this research is not to provide a in depth analysis of the justification or effectiveness of the foreign policy of the countries in question but provide a chronological analysis of the Finno-Colombian relationship, this approach will not be used. The same applies to postmodern political theory, which will not be applied as for the superficial nature of this political analysis using just one school of thought, that is to say, the liberal, feels adequate.

## 2.2 Narrativism

The analysis of the time frame of the relations is constructed realising a case study on the bilateral relationship by utilizing the post-narrativist method of historical research.

Narrativism, developed by Frank A. Ankersmit in the 1980's, is a school of thought in philosophy of historiography which emphasises the narrative nature of historical documents. According to Kuukkanen (2015), the text "*brings out the general perspective to the past and can be considered a suggestion about how to review it*". In his work *Narrative Logic - A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language* (1983) Ankersmit divided narrativism in two: narrative realism and narrative idealism. Narrative realism describes a text that aims to represent the past as it really was whereas narrative idealism paints a unique picture of the past which is more like a work of art than an accurate representation of the past (ibid.).

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<sup>2</sup> An extremely variable school of thought, in which the basic principle of the world order can be stated to be conflict amongst actors pursuing power.

The traditional historical realism is a school of thought in which historical research has been understood as creating a representation or a recreation of the past (Kuukkanen, 2015). In this school of thought, the historical narrative can be seen as an accurate description and re-creation of the events in the past. In his theory of representation Ankersmit adds a third entity between the representation and actual past: according to him, the representation portrays an aspect of the past thus representing just this aspect of the past rather than the actual past itself (Ankersmit, 2012, Chapters p.64-81 & 157-174). It can thus be seen, that the historical realism and narrativism are conflicting theories.

Kuukkanen constructs his post-narrativistic theory on these two conflicting interpretations, arguing that historical analysis is a discursive and argumentative praxis which does not intend to tell the truth about the world or reflect the past but to make an argument for the historian's own views. He states that it is important to note that the historian always operates in some kind of argumentative context (Kuukkanen, 2015)

In this work, the Finno-Colombian relationship is analysed through a post-narrative research. This means that the historical narrative of the bilateral relationships can be understood as a kind of a representation of the past events, whilst still simultaneously being merely the author's interpretation as well as a subjective view on the past events. The following analysis should be understood in the context of the Finnish view of the bilateral relationship by an author who works in a close contact with the Colombian diplomatic representation in Finland.

Additionally, given that in this occasion the political research was conducted in Finland which set considerable difficulties in obtaining material from the Colombian side. Because of this, the analysis is disproportionate to the Finnish view on the relations but, whenever possible, the Colombian voice is also added.

## 2.3 Methods

The research method used in this analysis is qualitative research, that is to say, explorative research in order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the researched phenomena, conducted through multiple systems of enquiry. In case of this research, the methods of obtaining data were historical documents as well as thematic interviews. The source material chosen represents the available official documentation on the bilateral relations (the material from the Colombian side is not as readily available as the Finnish archives are). The aim of this research has been to collect all possible material to realise case study analysis on the events during the given historical time frame.

The largest body of written source material comes from the archives of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. This material was obtained by visiting the Ministry's archives and requesting all the material dealing with Colombia. In total, the material constitutes of some 15 boxes of documents from the Finnish diplomatic representation accredited to Colombia, starting from the beginning of the 1950s and ending in 1993. It is worth noting that much of this documentation is classified and according to the Finnish legislation, is thus only made public 25 years after its creation.<sup>3</sup> It is also worth mentioning that the material is preselected and set aside by the archives according to their judgement and/or cataloguing. From this material consulted, some 130 pages were selected to be used as source material for this research.

Another important written source material was the autobiography by Erkki Alhanko. His book was utilized as a source material for early decades of the relationship as it is one of the only accessible written first-hand documentation of the Finno-Colombian relationships from the 1940's onwards. Erkki Alhanko was the first Finnish representative of the Finnish Foreign Ministry in Colombia and thus had a major role in establishing and developing the bilateral affiliation.

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<sup>3</sup> In the first paragraph of the section 24 of Act of Openness of Government activities 621/1999 on Secret official documents it is stated that; *Unless specifically provided otherwise, the following official documents shall be secret: (1) the documents of the Government Foreign Affairs Committee, unless otherwise decided by the Committee, as well as the political assessments of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Finnish missions abroad, the documents concerning political or economic negotiations with a foreign state and the coded messages in the field of foreign affairs administration, unless otherwise decided by the Ministry.* In section 31 of the same Act, the period of secrecy of official document is set at 25 years (Finlex, 621/1999).



In addition to written sources, interviews were also conducted with official parties relating to the bilateral relationships. From the Colombian side the interviewees included Fulvia Elvira Benavides Cotes, Chargé d’Affaires e.p. of Colombia in Finland 2013-2018 as well as Antero Pajari, the Honorary Consul of Colombia in Finland from 1979 to the present. These individuals were selected because of the small number of those representing the Colombian side of the bilateral relationships available in Finland. They had the longest and most extensive experience and knowledge of the topic of this research. From the Finnish representation in Colombia Mikko Pyhälä, Ambassador of Finland in Venezuela, accredited to Colombia 2006-2011 was also interviewed. The interview of the Ambassador Pyhälä was necessary in order to obtain information on the period of the timeframe of this research from which written documents are not accessible.

The interviews conducted were executed by utilising the thematic interview as defined by Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2008, p. 48): in a thematic interview, instead of concentrating on detailed questions, the important point is that the interview is guided by relevant themes and thus the questions asked from the different interviewees can vary as long as the theme remains. The interviews were also mostly unstructured in a sense that even though some of the questions were prepared beforehand, in practice the interviews were relatively informal and free flowing. The research during these somewhat unstructured conversations was conducted, as Klenke (2008, p. 129) defines, by “probing” into interesting and relevant topics that arose during the conversation.

This form of interview was chosen because all the individuals interviewed were related to the case purely by their profession and before asking the questions, it was unclear how much knowledge they had on the historical events researched. Due to this, the topics of conversation was prepared for each interviewee, but it was not possible to define the actual content of relevant questions before the conversation. Equally, it was necessary to have the possibility to probe into details and follow up any interesting comments with more in-depth questions - a task that would have been difficult to achieve through a structured interview.

When reviewing the source material critically, it can be stated that the source material used is mostly primary sources of information as it has been produced by government officials by both states. However, the reliability of the information provided in the sources can somewhat vary; especially the internal reports of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs can be judged as accurate, reliable and error free information on the Finnish position as it has been produced for internal use and not edited for the purpose of creating an image for an outside audience. It should be noted, however, that in Alhanko's memoir as well as the interviews the information might have been edited or represented in different way from the actual reality as it was intended for public use. This has been taken into account when conducting the analysis.

### 3. Context and previous research

#### 2.1 Previous research

Previous academic research into the bilateral relationship between Colombia and Finland has been quite scarce. The article collection "*Kahvi, Pahvi ja Tango*" by Pakkasvirta & Aronen (1998) features several articles with mentions of commercial and historical contacts between the two countries, although there are no works dedicated solely to Colombia. No academic monograph features information about the relationships, and shorter articles are also rather difficult to come by - if they exist.

However, other academic works indirectly dealing with Finno-Colombian relationships are Päivi Vaahterikko-Mejía's doctoral thesis "*Cultural differences in Ibero-Nordic communications: perceptions about Finnish and Colombian negotiators*" (2001) as well as Eemeli Jokelainen's Bachelor's thesis "*Kansainvälinen konttikauppa - Case Kolumbia*" (2015). Both of these works are on a smaller, more detailed case-study base and deal solely with the communicative, cultural as well as the commercial aspects of the relationship and do not elaborate or give a larger picture of the relations in general. Despite this, the latter is used as a source material for this research.

Interesting source material for research can also be found from a memoir "*Konsulina Kolumbiassa - kauppa kaukomailla 50 vuotta*" by Erkki Alhanko, as well as "*Desde el final de la tierra*" by the Chargé of Affairs of Colombia in Finland in 1994, Jose Neira Rey. Both of these books have been utilized in this research as source material, though Alhanko constitutes as a considerably richer source of information. There are also other non-academic windows through which to look at the contacts that have existed over the years; as an example, the several documentative series that have dedicated episodes to Fredrik Thomas Adlercreutz<sup>4</sup> and *Tummien Laulujen Maa*, the memoir of Totte Mannes, the wife of Eeros Mannes (a Finnish businessman operating in the paper industry) about their time in Colombia, could be mentioned even if they are not used in this thesis.

### 3.2 Aim of this research

The aim of this research is to create a cohesive picture of the bilateral relationship during the time frame chosen as well as to give a political and economic overview on the foreign policy of each country and how this reflects in the Finno-Colombian relationships.

After forming the narrative picture, this research aims to answer especially the following questions:

*How well does the bilateral relationship between Finland and Colombia reflect the official historical narrative of the foreign policy of each country?*

*Why has the economic potential of the Finno-Colombian relationships not been able to be realised and how has the domestic policy influenced the foreign policy and economic capacities of Colombia?*

*What does the future of the bilateral relationship look like?*

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<sup>4</sup> See for example Yle Areena series "Hurjia suomalaisia: Sotilas rakastuu señoritaan" or Huhta, 2003.

## 4. Historical background

### 4.1 Foreign policy and diplomacy in general

In this section an overview of the significance of foreign policy and diplomacy in general, as well as a brief look into the historical development of diplomacy will be taken.

According to Encyclopaedia Britannica, foreign policy can be defined as:

*General objectives that guide the activities and relationships of one state in its interactions with other states. The development of foreign policy is influenced by domestic considerations, the policies or behaviour of other states, or plans to advance specific geopolitical designs. Diplomacy is the tool of foreign policy, and war, alliances, and international trade may all be manifestations of it (2019).*

In this work, this definition of foreign policy is accepted, and diplomacy is considered to be the most important tool in practicing it. On its part, diplomacy can be defined as:

*The profession, activity or skill of managing international relations, typically by a country's representatives abroad (Oxford Dictionary, 2018).*

In its most typical manifestation of today, diplomacy is practised in foreign missions, usually in Embassies and consulates and is led by an ambassador. The ambassador can be a career diplomat, but in some occasions, individuals can also be named in diplomatic positions because of political reasons. Generally, however, most modern states have, as part of their Foreign Ministry, a group of individuals who serve as diplomats completing predetermined cycles of services in the missions abroad and at home. These individuals, whether political appointees or career diplomats, are classified in the diplomatic rank which is regulated by international law and several conventions.

It is often considered, that somewhat modern diplomacy started in the Renaissance Italy (Koskela et al., 2016 p. 8), but its roots can be traced back to the ancient Greece the city states which used heralds, accredited agents charged with the functions of the royal households, amongst other things (Nicolson, 1950 p. 20-21). The profession of diplomacy was recognised by the Italian states in the 15th century when they began appointing permanent Ambassadors (ibid., p. 26). The diplomats were now considered to be representatives of the sending state in the country they resided in and their personal moral and political views were no longer questioned as they were seen as “neutral” extension of their government. Relating to this, were also granted privileges such as extending the immunity of the diplomatic person to their property and actions (Koskela, Lahe & Ridanpää, 2016, p. 8).

After the diplomatic representations developed into permanent ones over the centuries, the foundation of professional diplomacy in its modern form was laid down with the Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 (Nicolson, 1949, p. 9) and the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle on 1818 (see for example Phillips, 1911). These congresses came about as part of a shift in diplomatic practises which Nicolson (1949, p. 70) calls a “transition from old diplomacy to new. These changes can largely be attributed to the shift in the form of governance that swept Europe as old Empires crumbled and monarchies gave way to more democratic and parliamentary governments all around the continent.

During these conferences the issues of prestige between the countries was addressed,<sup>5</sup> but the ranking of the representatives was still divided in two; “great nations” were allowed to name extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassadors, whilst smaller countries only ambassadors. This, of course lead into the questions about which countries constituted as “great nations” (Koskela et al. 2016, p. 8). These issues were resolved after the Second World War, after which all countries were allowed to appoint ambassadors of equal rank.

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<sup>5</sup> Previously there had been constant problems in between the diplomats over the hierarchy and superiority as the order of importance of the countries was rigid and defined by the pope thus eliminating the importance of, for example, seniority in the diplomatic corps.

The most important document of the diplomacy as we know it today is the Vienna Convention of 1961, in which all the principles on diplomatic relations, formed during the previous centuries, were gathered together and the diplomatic immunities were defined. On the following year, it was followed by the Vienna Convention on consular affairs. Both of these documents were formed in order to ensure the most efficient and standardized manner to manage a permanent diplomatic representation abroad, leaving out any possibility of multiple ways of interpretation and potential misuse of diplomatic privileges. They oblige the foreign representatives to follow the law of the country they are posted in - even if they do enjoy diplomatic immunity (Koskela et al., 2016, p. 9).

It can be stated that diplomacy corresponds to the traditional division of relations between states; its main objective has been with taking care of politics and enhancing trade. However, according to Koskela et al. (p. 10), the role of the diplomatic representations in the modern world have somewhat shifted from the “representing the Country and supervising its political, economic and educational interests” (as defined in, for example, the Finnish law on foreign affairs<sup>6</sup>) to increasingly encompass cultural aspects. The cultural relations have developed into a so called “third” dimension of international relations and in recent decades diplomacy has started to move towards integrating this new facet of enhancing the relationships outside the traditional realm (more about cultural relations see e.g. Mitchell, 1986). Cultural aspects have become increasingly inseparable part of not just bilateral, but also the multilateral cooperation, as well as key characteristics of international organisations (consider e.g. UNESCO). Koskela et al. (2006, p. 10) note, that political, economic and cultural work can often not even be separated from each other as knowing the culture enhances commerce and tourism and cultivating a good image of the country is also part of political influencing.

According to Mitchell (1986, p. 5), cultural diplomacy “seeks to impress, to present a favourable image, so that diplomatic operations as a whole are facilitated”. In Colombia cultural diplomacy has taken the form of *Plan de Promoción de País* as well as *Diplomacia Deportivo y Cultural*, both of which are the Foreign Ministry’s programs

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<sup>6</sup> See Finlex 204/2000

through which artists, musicians and sport representatives visit other countries in order to promote Colombia. On the Finnish side, the cultural institutes, operating in 17 different countries, do not just represent and promote Finnish art but act as a good example of the cultural cooperation.<sup>7</sup> The cultural institutes also form part of Team Finland, Finland's "*network of public sector actors providing internationalisation services*", together with several ministries (Team Finland, 2018).

The growing cultural aspect of diplomacy is an interesting development in intergovernmental relationship, but beyond this brief look into its basic meaning in the Finno-Colombian relationship it will not be further analysed in this thesis because of the limitation of space and an attempt to keep the focus more concise. These cultural aspects and the effect this have had on the relationship between Finland and Colombia would be an interesting topic for future research

## 4.2 Colombia

Colombia is a country located in the north-west of South America, at the point where Central America connects to the South American continent. It is the only South American country with coastline both on the Pacific and Caribbean Sea and one of the 13 countries the equator passes through which means that, for the most part, the country is on the tropical climate zone. However, the Andes, that run through the country from the south-west to the north-east do not just create big climatic differences but divide Colombia to different geographical zones. These zones have been historically rather isolated from each other because of long distances and poor connections between the regions (Hunter, 1962 p. 7).

The country, then, is divided into three climate zones, usually referred to as *tierra fría* (over 2000 metres above the sea level), *tierra templada* (900-2000 metres above the sea level) and *tierra caliente* (with less than 900 metres of altitude) (Banco de la República de Colombia, 2014). Naturally, the country's different climate zones also

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<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Finnish institutes do not operate under that Foreign Ministry or respond to it but are managed by independent private foundations working in collaboration with the Ministry. Thus, it can be argued they do engage into cultural diplomacy but are not part of the official foreign policy planning or creation of the country image abroad.

mean different vegetational zones and that various commercial crops can be cultivated in different parts of the region. Coffee and cut flowers are the two largest agricultural exports. Coffee, especially, has played a major role in forming Colombian identity in the world of global trade. Other major crops include banana, soy, sugarcane, cotton and oil palm. Mining is also an important commercial activity and the mining exports include oil,<sup>8</sup> coal, gold and, to a lesser degree, emeralds (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2019).

Colombian population stands at approximately 45,5 million and whilst it has a high birth rate, there has also been high rates of emigration which has kept the population growth on a relatively moderate level (DANE, 2018). Whilst urbanization has been increasing in the past decades, swelling the number of inhabitants especially in the capital Bogotá (8 million people) and other large cities such as Medellín (3 million), the percentage of the country's urban population is "only" 77,8% of the total population; a relatively low number in the Latin American context (ibid.).

As stated, coffee has traditionally been the most important plant of cultivation in Colombia when considering the international markets. The coffee production was started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it did not become an important product of export until second half of the century. As the world economy expanded, demand for coffee grew in the United States as well as Germany and France, and Colombian coffee production increased in order to take advantages of the lucrative markets. Even though the Colombian coffee industry experienced setbacks at the turn of the century because of the fall of international coffee prices and the Thousand Day War<sup>9</sup>, the industry grew dramatically at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the long-term politics and the creation of National Federation of Coffee growers in 1927 (FEDECAFE). It administered and managed all the revenue from the duties of coffee exports on behalf of the National Government as well as actively participates in formulation and implementation of national policy for coffee industry. This new organisation meant that Colombia became the second of the largest producers and

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<sup>8</sup> Which today is Colombia's most important export product.

<sup>9</sup> *Guerra de los Mil Días* was a civil armed conflict between the Conservative and Liberal parties as well as radical factions, lasting from 1899 to 1902



exporter of coffee in the world (after Brazil) and the Colombian coffee has become synonymous with some of the best quality coffee in the world.

A significant aspect of the Colombian agricultural sector is, of course, also the illegal cultivating of coca plants and the production of cocaine, which, from the 1980's onwards has grown to be the most important source of income for the anti-governmental guerrilla groups and criminal organisations. Cocaine has been a massive problem for the country, and the government has struggled to limit and control it. In 2004 Colombia produced 80% of the cocaine trafficked in the global markets (Mason, 2010 p. 330-333) and during the last decade the government has made great efforts in destroying the illegal cultivations and, as part of the peace treaty of 2016, offered subsidy programmes for farmers who substitute their coca crops for other plants such as cocoa beans and fruits (BBC, 2017).

Unlike many other Latin American countries, during its history, Colombia has been majorly ruled by constitutional civil governments after its independence in 1819. However, despite the constitutional civil rule or, in part perhaps because of it - as the state has always remained a rather weak actor - the extremely divided Colombia has, throughout its whole history, suffered from violent conflicts that have majorly influenced the way the country has been shaped. Colombians have lived through nine civil wars after gaining independence; the first one, led by the legendary military leader Simon Bolívar against the Spanish, broke out in 1812 and, it could be argued, the last one came to an end in 2016 when the biggest leftist guerrilla group, FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*), signed the peace treaty with the Colombian government.<sup>10</sup>

This however, is not to say that the conflicts have ended in the country - there are still armed groups such as the guerrilla organisation ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*) and drug cartels, which continue a politically or economically motivated war against the Colombian state. Colombia also remains one of the most economically divided and unequal Latin American countries where social and economic realities starkly differ between the rich elite and the poorer population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019).

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<sup>10</sup> More about FARC as well as this peace process in the Analysis-chapter

It could thus be stated, that Colombia's complicated and conflict-ridden history of violence has still not seen its closing chapters, but at least on the surface the situation is vastly improving.

When considering the political system of Colombia is, according to its Constitution:

*"A social state under the rule of law, organized in the form of a unitary republic, decentralized, with autonomy of its territorial units" (Article 1)*

And

*The President of the Republic is the Chief of State, head of government, and supreme administrative authority. The national government is composed of the President of the Republic, the Cabinet ministers, and the directors of administrative departments. The President and the minister or director of the appropriate department represent the government in any particular issue (Article 115).*

According to the Economic Intelligence Unit Colombia is classified as a flawed democracy.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.2.1 Brief history of the Colombian foreign policy

The Republic of Gran Colombia was established in 1819 when the state gained its independence from the Spanish crown and united present-day Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela and Panama as well as parts of Peru, Brazil and Guyana as one country which was governed by Simon Bolívar from 1819 until his death in 1830. Within this Pan-American nation there were internal struggles for power, and the union of the regions did not last long: by the time of Bolívar's death the country had reduced to the territory more or less corresponding to present-day Colombia and Panama. During the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Colombia experienced various different forms of governance<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> A nation "where elections are fair and free and basic civil liberties are honored but may have issues (e.g. media freedom infringement). These nations have significant faults in other democratic aspects, including underdeveloped political culture, low levels of participation in politics, and issues in the functioning of governance." The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example Jimeno 2009.

resulting into a national state as defined by the 1886 constitution.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps more logical to start analysing the foreign policy of the nation after the creation of this modern state of Colombia.

Ever since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the foreign policy of Colombia has been defined, as is the case with most Latin American countries, by its relationship with the global super power of the region – the United States.<sup>14</sup> The leading elite has felt that by positioning itself close to the US, Colombia would achieve a more “privileged position” in the world order. In reality, however, this has led the country to be more of an object than a subject in the international stage. It has also guaranteed the country economic and military resources beyond its own capacity specially to deal with internal conflicts (Dallanegra, 2002).

Another important general factor in the external relations of Colombia is that its governments have traditionally practised more “personal and corporate diplomacy” than foreign policy (Dallanegra, 2002). As the Colombian system as well as the foreign policy is led by the President, each government has defined its foreign policy objectives mainly based on the way they have understood national interests. This has led to fragmented foreign policy with little continuation from one government to another. It is also interesting to note that Colombia has during its history lost 54% of its territories.<sup>15</sup> According to Angarita (2016), this is largely because the armed forces of the country have always been tied into internal conflicts instead of being able to defend the sovereignty of the national territory.

After the conflict over Panama Canal with United States,<sup>16</sup> Colombia was involved in series of border conflicts with its neighbours in the late 1920's and early 1930's. The

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<sup>13</sup> This was achieved through a political project called *La Regeneración* or Regeneration, headed by Rafael Nuñez Moledo (President of Colombia between 1880-1884 and 1888-1894).

<sup>14</sup> This is often referred to as *Respice Polum* or looking at the Polar Star or, in this sense, the North and thus to the United States

<sup>15</sup> If considered that Colombia represents a continuum of the same state as Gran Colombia.

<sup>16</sup> Colombia had assumed the project in 1888 from the French engineer Fernando de Lessep who had started it with cooperation from the United States. Colombia rejected the United States' terms about the land ownership around the canal which lead to a conflict between the countries and ultimately the separation of Panama from Colombia in 1903. After the conflict, United States compensated Colombia with 25 million dollars and special privileges in the usage of the Canal in 1921. (See, for example, McCullough, 1977)

economic crisis of 1929<sup>17</sup> also affected Colombia as the global coffee prices plummeted. This led the government of Enrique Olaya Herrera into signing an economic agreement with the United States, and, for example, giving it rights to exploit Colombia's oil and rubber reserves. His follower, Alfonso Lopez Pumarejo, highlighted the importance of global institutions and Colombia joined the League of Nations<sup>18</sup> as a founding member in 1920. This represented a new trend in the Colombian foreign policy, the "juridical" policy which stresses the importance of global organisations<sup>19</sup> in the external relations of the country. During Eduardo Santos Montero's presidency from 1938, the United States became, for the first time, the biggest market for Colombian products as the Second World War made it more complicated to sell goods to the traditional importers - Spain, France and Great Britain (Dallanegra, 2002).

The conflict between the leftist guerrillas and the Colombian state in the 1960's<sup>20</sup> did not have a major impact on the country's relations with its neighbours until the 1980's; as the armed groups began to operate in the border regions, several military confrontations expanded to neighbouring states.<sup>21</sup> However, according to the Constitution of 1991 Article 9, "the foreign policy of Colombia will be oriented toward the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean" (p. 5). Colombia is part of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Caribbean Community, Organization of American States (OAS) and the Andean Community, as well as the Pacific Alliance<sup>22</sup>. Currently the Colombian President Ivan Duque is heading a creation of an integration body called Prosur, or Forum of Progress and Development of South America, to replace the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), from which Colombia withdrew in 2018.

## 4.3 Finland

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<sup>17</sup> Known as the Great Depression, which started by the stock market crash on Wall Street plummeting the United States into a deep economic recession which had a global impact.

<sup>18</sup> Which later became the United Nations in 1942.

<sup>19</sup> A trend that has since been maintained in the country's foreign policy planning.

<sup>20</sup> Explored in more detail later in the 'Analysis' chapter

<sup>21</sup> See for example Ramirez, 2002

<sup>22</sup> A Latin American trade bloc formed by Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru.

Finland is a country located in the Northern Europe with land borders with Sweden, Norway and Russia. It is a Nordic country and, together with Scandinavia, is situated in the geographical region of Fennoscandia.

Finland's population is approximately 5,5 million people with most of it concentrated in the southern region and around the capital area. The level of urbanization is 85%, but this can be largely explained by the small size of Finnish towns and urban centres (more than 15 000 people) and the effect this has on the statistics (Tilastokeskus).

Finland is one of the world's most northernmost countries. It is mostly located in the circumboreal region and can be further divided into taiga, mixed forest and grasslands. Some 78% of Finland is forest and 10% of the area is rivers, lakes and ponds leaving little cultivated land (Luke, 2013). Finland's climate type is mostly subarctic with the southernmost regions showing characteristics of maritime and continental climate with warm summer humid continental type, whilst the northern tip of the country rests in the tundra zone. Because of the geographical factors, Finland is not a large surplus producer on the agricultural sector but has significant resources in timber, minerals such as iron, chromium, copper, nickel and gold, and fresh water. The country's exports are mainly in wood products, but in recent years diesel fuels have become the biggest export<sup>23</sup>. Finland also exports electronics, machinery, vehicles and other engineered metal products as well as chemicals (Kauppalehti, 8.3.2018).

Finland was formed as a uniform political entity in 1809 when Sweden lost the Finnish territory to Russia. The country was established as an autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland within the Russian Empire. Finland had been part of the Kingdom of Sweden since the middle ages, and even after it became part of the Russian empire, the Swedish legislation was kept in place. The country also remained bilingual with Finnish being the language of the majority, but Swedish continuing as the language of governance and a large minority. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Finland acquired its own monetary unit and stamps as well as improvements to the status of the Finnish language which highlighted the Finnish identity as a separate one in relation to Russia. The larger russification policies of the non-Russian minorities, also including Finland,

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<sup>23</sup> Finnish companies refine crude oil as well as produce biodiesels from other sources

by the Russian governments in the 19th-early 20th century encountered passive resistance and ultimately contributed to the political willingness of the Finns to strive for independence after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917.

The most important export in Finland has, as stated, historically been wood products. The first product of export was tar, which became an important industry in the area of Oulu in the 15<sup>th</sup> century in order to satisfy the demand of tar for the ships of the large naval powers Great Britain and Holland. Oulu was one of the biggest tar production centres in Europe alongside of Arkangel and tar the most important export product for the area that is now known as Finland (Lyytimäki & Hakala, 2008, p. 314-315). Later, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, timber rose in importance as an export as well because of the domestic demands and especially the rapid growth of the domestic industry in the 1870's which contributed to the industrialization of the whole country. The biggest destination of export continued to be Great Britain. The saw industry continued to be the most important wood industry of the country up until the 1950's, but the paper products became the biggest export already in the 1930's. The biggest market for paper products was the Soviet Union. In the 1950's and 1960's the forest industry became extremely large in Finland, partly because of the war reparation for the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup> In the 1980's, the forest companies started to become more international and grow in size through acquisitions and fusions (Kolbe, 2003, p. 285-289).

According to its constitution in Finland:

*The powers of the State in Finland are vested in the people, who are represented by the Parliament (Section 2). The Parliament is unicameral. It consists of two hundred Representatives, who are elected for a term of four years at a time (Section 24). The President of the Republic makes decisions in Government on the basis of motions proposed by the Government (Section 58). The Government consists of the Prime Minister and the necessary number of Ministers (Section 60).*

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<sup>24</sup> After the Continuation War Finland was ordered to pay \$226,500,000 worth of war reparations, which were mostly paid in vessels and ships as well as wood and metal products. As a result, the metal industry of Finland also grew considerably.

The Economist Intelligence Unit has rated Finland a full democracy<sup>25</sup>.

Finland is considered to be one of the least corrupt countries with high equality between the sexes (Transparency International, 2019). It also has below average income differences within the European context and has consistently ranked in the top 5 in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)<sup>26</sup>. After the civil war in the 1918<sup>27</sup> there has been no intrastate conflict in the country and Finland is also considered the least fragile state in the world with a stable democracy (Fund for Peace, 2017). In 2018, Finland was ranked as the “happiest country in the world”, meaning that its citizens had the best access to basic services and least unstable living conditions in the world (Helliwell et al., 2018).

#### 4.3.1 Brief history of the Finnish foreign policy

According to the Finnish constitution, “Finland participates in international co-operation for the protection of peace and human rights and for the development of society” and, according to §93, “the foreign policy of Finland is directed by the President of the Republic in cooperation with the Government” (Finlex, 731/1999).

After the country had recovered from the bloody civil war in 1918, which halted the development of foreign relations right after its independence, Finnish foreign policy was reorganised on a more stable basis. Finland established formal relationships with the Soviet Union and sought possibilities for cooperation from the bordering regions. However, according to professor emeritus of history Seppo Hentilä, the only viable option for the Finnish foreign policy in its geopolitical reality was the so called “glorious isolation”, with neutrality and international cooperation through League of

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<sup>25</sup> A nation, “where civil liberties and basic political freedoms are not only respected, but also reinforced by a political culture conducive to the thriving of democratic principles. These nations have a valid system of governmental checks and balances, independent judiciary whose decisions are enforced, governments that function adequately, and media that is diverse and independent. These nations have only limited problems in democratic functioning”. The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016.

<sup>26</sup> A worldwide study measuring the 15-year-old school pupil’s performance in mathematics, science and reading in the member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

<sup>27</sup> Fought between the conservative “whites”, and the “reds”, who mostly composed of industrial and agrarian workers and lead by the Social Democratic Party

Nations in its centre (Saukkonen et al., 2008). This policy continued during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The situation changed dramatically in 1939 after Germany attacked Poland starting the Second World War. Finland declared itself neutral together with all other Nordic states, but after failed negotiations with the eastern neighbour, the Soviet Union attacked Finland in November of the same year. The so-called Winter War ended in March 1940 and Finland agreed to the peace terms, which meant loss of territories from the Eastern part of the country. One could argue that partly because of the hopes of recovering those territories, the Finnish government decided to participate to the Germany's operation against the Soviet Union in late spring of 1941 starting the Continuation War (Vehviläinen, 1991 p. 129). After three years of fighting, the war ended with the Moscow Armistice in 1944. Soviet Union demanded that Finland drove German troops from its territory, which eventually lead to Lapland War<sup>28</sup> 1944-45. Finland was also required to sever diplomatic ties with Germany.

The post-war foreign policy of Finland had in its aim two main objectives: to obtain permanent condition of peace through which the country could leave the limitations of sovereignty dictated in the Moscow Peace Agreement behind and return to state of normality and to gain good relationships based on trust with the Soviet Union in order to prevent future conflicts. This policy reached its goal in April 1948 when Finland and the Soviet Union signed an Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. The most important parts of this agreement concerned military positions and cooperation, and, in it, Finland pledged to stay out of the great-power conflicts. Even though Finland was accepted to join the United Nations already in the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947, this was one of the things that could not happen until 1955 because of disagreements between the great-powers<sup>29</sup>. In the same year, Finland joined the Nordic Council (Vehviläinen, 1991 p. 129).

The events of 1960's and 1970's represent a time in Finnish foreign policy often describe with the word "Finlandization", which has come to mean a situation in which

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<sup>28</sup> A conflict of limited casualties which however left Finnish Lapland devastated.

<sup>29</sup> In practise, Finland's application was blocked by the Soviet Union in the Security Council until the tensions between the superpowers had somewhat eased in the 1950's (Eduskunta).



one powerful country makes its smaller neighbour abide with its foreign policy rule. This was largely the case with Finland and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. However, despite the close relationship between the countries also on the economic sector, Finland's biggest economic interests were in the markets of the Western Europe to which Finland aimed to integrate itself within the given political framework. It fortified the cooperation with OEEC<sup>30</sup> until it became a full member of OECD.<sup>31</sup> Finland also joined GATT as well as International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank. However, membership in the European Economic Community was not an option within the neutral foreign policy (Vehviläinen, 1991 p. 129). Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union Finland has not become a member of NATO<sup>32</sup>, though the membership is a topic that regularly surfaces in the political dialogue when considering the objectives of the foreign policy.

## 5. Analysis

### 5.1 In the Beginning: Starting the trade after the Second World War

The relationship between Colombia and Finland has been naturally rather distant because of the large geographical separation, but some contact was established already during the earliest moments of the Colombian history when General Count Fredrik Thomas Fredrik Adlercreutz from Porvoo became one of the heroes in the Colombian war of independence and later the governor of the town of Mompox (Riiho, 1998, p. 22-24).

The Finnish Foreign Ministry's country profile (Ulkoministeriö, 2018) states Colombia recognised Finland as an independent country on the last day of 1919 and official diplomatic relationships were established in 1954. The commercial relationship between the two countries were greatly facilitated by Honorary Consul Erkki Alhanko and the Pajari-family.

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<sup>30</sup> Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, the predecessor of OECD

<sup>31</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development founded in 1961 to replace OEEC to advance economic progress and world trade.

<sup>32</sup> North Atlantic Treaty Organization, an intergovernmental military alliance headed by United States of America

By the 1940's, according to Alhanko, the stance of Finland's Foreign Ministry was the Finns "knew" countries like Brazil and Argentina "so well that there was nothing else to learn about them" but countries which were little known in the Foreign Ministry included "Colombia and Venezuela" (Alhanko, 2009, p. 33). Because of this, the Finnish Minister of Commerce and Industry Uuno Takki and Minister of Social Welfare Yrjö Murto recommended that Alhanko travelled to Colombia in order to "study the commercial situation" of the country (ibid. p. 34). Several Finnish companies from the paper and coffee industry as well as the Chamber of Commerce also expressed their interest in supporting Mr. Alhanko in this task.

Pentti Pajari, the Finnish representative of FEDECAFE wrote him a letter of recommendation. The Pajari family had a longstanding connection to Colombia after Vilho Pajari, a sailor, travelled there in the 1920's upon a suggestion from his brother Pentti in order to find products to sell in Finland and brought back sacks of coffee to be sold on the Finnish markets.<sup>33</sup> The family started a company called Colombian Kahvi Oy and had several coffee houses in Helsinki. During his travels Vilho Pajari had made contact with FEDECAFE and through this contact Colombian Kahvi became the representative of FEDECAFE in Finland and the Pajaris a family in which the title of Honorary Consul of Colombia has been passed down to next generations (Pajari, 2018). Alhanko arrived in Colombia in 1947 apparently as the first representative of the Finnish Ministry in the country.

According to the research conducted by Alhanko at the time, 85% of all Colombian exports were coffee and this was also Finland's main product of interest, especially because there was a growing demand for coffee in the country.<sup>34</sup> In the late 1940's and early 1950's Colombia coffee industry was undergoing a structural reform and expansion during which transport facilities were improved in order to transport the harvest to the cities and direct and indirect government financing as well as fixed priced for exports by FEDECAFE helped to boost the industry further. Colombia's national

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<sup>33</sup> Coffee was already a demanded product in Finland in the 1920 as the nation had had high levels of coffee consumptions all the way from the early 19th century (Forsius, 1993). For more information about history of Finnish coffee consumption see for example Koivisto, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Its use had been regulated during the War with food coupons and the first coffee load after the war had arrived in Finland on the 1946. The regulating lasted until 1954 (Linninlä et al., 1992, p. 187)

development in the 1950's, the country's industrialization and urbanization, can in fact be linked to this coffee boom as it created the first proper transport network and improved the economic situation in the countryside (Steiner & Vallejo, 2010, p. 145). In fact, by 1960's Colombia produced a considerable surplus of coffee and FEDECAFE was looking for new selling regions (Hunter, 1962, p. 43). This created a good economic opportunity for the two countries, as one was looking to increase its coffee purchases and the other had increasing quantities of good quality surplus product to sell.

When Alhanko arrived in Bogotá there was no official or commercial representation. However, there were individuals such as Pertti Pajari and Erkki Mikkola<sup>35</sup> who had business connections with FEDECAFE and perhaps partly because of these individual connections FEDECAFE gave Finland a loan worth of 4 million dollars for coffee purchases in 1948 (Alhanko, 2009, p. 83). According to Alhanko, the biggest hindrance for the commercial relations for both countries was the lack of currency and because of this, an agreement on bilateral trade<sup>36</sup> was signed in 1949. This agreement allowed Finland to buy large quantities of coffee during the next years which were paid in paper and carton. Even though Colombia required import licenses on paper products, those buying from Finland were exempt from this requirement which greatly facilitated the acquirement of new buyers in the regulated market (ibid. p. 83-86). Later in 1953 the Finnish imports expanded from paper products to cellulose and metal and chemical industry as the amounts of coffee purchased demanded more products as payment than solely the paper industry could provide (ibid., p. 87 & 244). The new products included ships, machines, trucks and even ready built wooden houses, which were constructed to Cartagena and Barranquilla on the Caribbean coast (ibid. p. 90 & 244)

The bilateral trade agreement was valid until the end of 1967 and the trade grew "on a steady pace" during the 1950's and the early years of 1960s (ibid.) despite Colombia

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<sup>35</sup> Mikkola had worked as the representative of FINNCELL, the organisation of Finnish cellulose producers in Argentina as well as in the Finnish Embassy in Washington, which was in charge affairs with most of Latin America at the time.

<sup>36</sup> Barter trade between two sovereign countries which does not require hard currency as the goods are paid in goods. Bilateral trade was popular in Finland's business circles as it was the form of trade preferred by and used with Soviet Union, Finland's biggest trade partner, at the time. See e.g. Laurila 1995

going through a ten-year civil war between the Liberal and Conservative parties.<sup>37</sup> In order to end the civil war, the army took power and Colombia was under the military rule of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla from 1953 onwards. This is the only occasion of non-civil rule in the Colombian history and is generally considered to be time of great economic and social progress despite the fact that the armed conflict kept raging on in the countryside. However, Rojas Pinilla's rule was also marked by censorship and political persecution of the left-wing politicians and especially the communists. The rule of Rojas Pinilla came to an end after the general strike in 1957, after which democratic rule was restored the following year. The two parties declared a power sharing agreement called "*Frente Nacional*" for the next 16 years, during which the presidency was altered between the representatives of each party ensuring a more peaceful political environment. With this development, the power was left in the hands of the political elite with little interest in the grievances of the masses, but a further armed conflict was evaded (Valtonen, 2001, p. 364-65).

## 5.2 1960: Bilateral trade and social developments

As Pakkasvirta and Aronen (1998, p. 10-12) show, Finland's general interest towards Latin America grew in many different sectors in the 1960's. This was also the case with Colombia, no doubt aided by the blossoming new bilateral trade relationship. The Embassy in charge of Colombia had been the Finnish Mission in Washington, but when Finland opened its Embassy to Peru in 1963, the Colombian affairs were transferred under its jurisdiction. This year also saw a first Ministerial visit between the countries when the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland, Olavi Mattila, visited Bogotá in November.

According to a report written in Lima from the "Embassy of Finland in Bogota" and sent in February 1963 (UM, 1/63), the trade relationship between Finland and Colombia had greatly progressed in the previous years as the Finns had increased their purchase of coffee. The report also mentions an increasing Colombian interest towards Finnish products, but because of the cumbersome system of approving import licences in the

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<sup>37</sup> La Violencia or the Violence started in 1948 with the murder of Liberal politician Jorge Eliecer Gaitan in Bogotá provoking riots called *el Bogotazo* in the capital. This violence spiralled into a conflict between the militant groups of the two parties, claiming the life of almost 200 000 people and displacing 1 000 000 around the country during the next 10 years (Hunter, 1962, p. 15).

Colombian end, the trade was unbalanced and unfavourable for Finland by almost 5 million dollars. There was some interest from the Colombian political leaders to balance the situation and more licenses were to be granted in the coming years. However, by 1965 the imports from most countries had been halted almost completely as Colombia introduced a strong currency control and set further import licenses on all products in order to maintain the Colombian peso more stable when Carlos Lleras Restrepo assumed the presidency in 1966.

In 1967, in a letter sent to the trade department of the Finnish Foreign Ministry Consul Alhanko stated, that the reason for the unbalanced trade was that

*“Colombia’s positive economic development has not been as brisk as expected and [...] production and consumption have not increased as expected meaning that raw materials and semi processed products (paper and carton) have not been imported from Finland as much as was estimated or licenses have been granted also for other countries than Finland because of pressure from United States and international monetary funds as part of the so called Plan Vallejo”<sup>38</sup>*  
(Alhanko, 2009, p. 318)<sup>39</sup>

The Colombian trade with other countries, such as Spain and West Germany, was equally unbalanced as:

*“even though Colombia continuously express its interest to prefer bilateral agreements [...] it knows it is too depended on the support of United States and international monetary funds and cannot act fully against their instructions”<sup>40</sup>*  
(ibid. p. 319).

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<sup>38</sup> The Vallejo Plan was the formulation of Colombian economic policy that allowed the entry of raw materials, inputs and capital goods, free of customs duties, in exchange for equivalent exports. United States was granted several licenses in exchange for AID-loans in 1967

<sup>39</sup> “Colombian [sic] taloudellinen kehitys ei ole ollut niin nopea ja suotuista [...] joten tuotanto ja kulutus eivät ole kasvaneet odotetusti, mistä johtuen raaka-aineita ja puolivalmisteita (paperi ja kartonki), ei ole maahantuotu Suomesta niin paljon kuin on arvioitu, tai niille on ryhdytty myöntämään lisenssejä muistakin maista kuin Suomesta, lähinnä Yhdysvaltojen ja kansainvälisten rahastojen painostuksesta ns. Plan Vallejon puitteissa.”

<sup>40</sup> “Vaikka Colombia [sic] jatkuvasti ilmoittaa haluavansa suosia bilateraalisopimuksia [...] se tietää olevansa liiaksi riippuvainen Yhdysvaltojen ja kansainvälisten rahastojen tuesta, eikä voi menetellä täysin niiden ohjeita vastaan.”

Despite of this economic policy, the foreign policy of Lleras intended to shift the Colombian focus towards its neighbours, especially Venezuela and Ecuador, as well as other countries further away in order to diversify the international relations and thus fortify Colombia's position in the international community in general.<sup>41</sup> The new foreign policy was on a *Respice Similia* principle, in contrast with the previous *Respice Polum* in which Colombia's main focus had been the relations with the United States of America (Dallanegra Pedraza). However, it could be speculated that this policy was aimed towards decreasing the power of the US in the continent and thus pressuring it to give more aid to developing countries such as Colombia. In 1967 president Lleras expressed his wish to continue the fruitful trade relations with Finland despite the fact the bilateral trade agreement came to an end (UM, R-24/5, 1976). Finland set up three commercial representations for Colombia in 1967 but they were unsuccessful in advancing the trade in any meaningful way (UM, I/77). Alhanko also stated that the Finnish exports started to suffer from 1968 onwards, despite the fact attempts of restructuring the export policies during the next decades (Alhanko, 2009, p. 148-9).

It is worth noting that in 1967, Colombian manufacturing sector was experiencing inefficiencies which were attributed to financial problems as well as to the import substitution industrialization.<sup>42</sup> Because of this Colombia changed its economic policy towards exports promotion with hopes that opening of the economy would foster great competition abroad and thus more efficient economic manufacturing sector. This made the export manufacturing, meaning mainly coffee and somewhat oil in the Colombian context, the fastest growing sector (US Library of Congress). This had a major impact also in the Finnish-Colombian relations as can be seen further on as the government concentrated funds to agricultural sector instead of industrial development.

The 1960's were socially very different decades in Colombia and Finland. In Finland the left-wing parties won the parliamentary elections in 1966 and the creation of welfare state became the Government's political goal. The next governments made significant social reforms, such as basic education act in 1968, family pensions to guarantee

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<sup>41</sup> Colombia's exports to neighbouring countries constituted less than 1% of the Colombian exports in 1958 (Hunter, 1962, p. 107).

<sup>42</sup> Import substitution industrialization or ISI was an economic and development policy, largely applied in the Latin America from 1950 to 1980, which aimed to reduce foreign dependency through local production of the industrialized products.

economic help for low income families and subsidies for medical expenses from the social security funds.

Meanwhile in Colombia the decade following the bloody civil war saw the creation of the leftist guerrilla groups FARC, ELN and M-19. Colombia was a hugely unequal society with the elite educating their children abroad whilst 37,7% of the population over 15-year-old was illiterate (this number rising to 50% in rural areas) in 1958<sup>43</sup> and over a million children annually were left without any education (Hunter, 1962 p. 20-21). Paternalism was widespread, and companies stepped in providing their workers social benefits such as housing and subsidized products when the government did not (ibid., p. 33-4). In the turn of the decade, the country was still divided into *latifundias* (large estates) and *minifundias*, which Hunter (1962, p. 12) defines as “estates too small to support the owners or renters” and there was some considerable pressure for land reform (ibid., p. 42). In 1961, due to the government starting an Accelerated Economic Development programme which subsidized the large industrial farmers on expense of small-scale farmers in order to bring economic development to the rural areas some 40 000 families were left landless. Meanwhile, because of the century’s old traditions of inequality, movements that looked towards Cuba and the “common man’s” revolution of Fidel Castro had also emerged in Colombia (ibid., p. 44). As a response to this government’s “reversed landform” of the Accelerate Economic Development programme, militants residing in the countryside who had fought during the Violence for the Liberal party and since switched their political orientation to communism, declared independence for rural areas of Tolima in 1964. The Government’s answer to this was military force. After a severe military attack, 48 men escaped to the mountains, amongst them Marulanda Veléz, Tirofijo<sup>44</sup> and other members of the Colombian Communist Party, and founded FARC, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). This was a military organization to bring together several different communist groups in order to fight against the rightist government for a more equal land distribution. Around the same time other leftist guerrilla groups such as the National Liberation Army (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional* or ELN), Popular Liberation Army (*Ejército Popular de Liberación* or EPL) and, a few years later, el *Movimiento 19 de abril* (M-19) were also

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<sup>43</sup> In comparison, this number was below 5% in Finland in 1960 (Myllyntaus, 1991).

<sup>44</sup> Who later became known as a significant leader in FARC-EP.

formed in different parts of the country. This marked the start of the most recent intrastate conflict in Colombia which was to last for over 50 years.

### 5.3 1970: Hopes for business and Presidential visits

The Colombian coffee industry grew rapidly during the late 1970's (Palacios, 2006, p. 223) and in 1977 the trade remained unbalanced because of Finland's large coffee purchases. The "coffee politics" were extremely important to Colombia's economic development as well as foreign politics and, because of this, the coffee federation funded the Finnish imports by 80% through currency compensation making it easier for Finnish products to enter the market. Despite of this, the Finnish officials found it frustrating that Colombia did not grant more import licenses and thus hindered the Finnish possibilities for exporting products (UM, 1/77).

In the years of 1970's Colombia moved away from protectionism and started to liberate its trade agreements and created a uniform import licensing system in which products were classified in two groups: to those which could be traded freely and those which needed a licence. Following the larger global economic trend at the time, Colombia also joined the 1975 the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1975 and again in 1980.

In other foreign policy matters, Finland raised its profile in the 1970's. The third stage of the high summit of Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe organized in 1975 in Helsinki brought Finland to international attention. It was the first meeting where the leaders of Soviet Union and United States met each other after the start of the Cold War. 35 countries have signed the Helsinki Act which resulted from the high-level meeting and the OSCE summit is widely held as the crown jewel of the Finnish diplomacy and foreign policy (Mäntyvaara, 2016 p. 112). A former secretary of state Jukka Valtasaari has stated that this period, starting from the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks from 1969 till OSCE in 1975, was the golden age for Finland in the international community, during which it was said to "fight in the league above its own weight class"<sup>45</sup> (ibid., p. 260).

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<sup>45</sup> "Suomesta sanottiin, että se otteli painoiaan korkeammassa luokassa." (iiii, p. 259-60).



In 1977 Finland fortified its representation in Colombia with a commercial secretary and made plans to appoint a chargé d'affaires to further improve the economic relations (UM, I/77). Because of the failure of the Brazilian coffee crops, Finland had increased its coffee purchases from Colombia in the previous year and the Finnish officials felt that the trade balance was thus "completely unacceptable" (ibid.) However, during the late 1970's, Colombia was granting more import licenses as previously mentioned and the country had large currency reserves. The Finns had also negotiated "better funding benefits to Finland than any other country"<sup>46</sup> in order to make up for the imbalanced trade (ibid.). The Finnish officials felt, that this opportunity could be best taken advantage of by setting up stronger representation in Bogotá in order to look after the Finnish economic interests. Equally, there were hopes that Finland could participate in many upcoming development programmes in the country and provide machinery for road building, wood refining and transportation (ibid.)

The Colombian foreign trade policy saw significant changes during the presidency of Alfonso López Michelsen 1974-1978. He believed that the previous economic policy of focusing heavily on the industrialization of the country was harming the competitiveness of the economy. He believed that liberalizing foreign trade and the financial sector as well as privatization of state enterprises was the way of making Colombia "the Japan of South America"<sup>47</sup> (Palacios, 2006, p. 195). However, Lopez's regime failed to do much more for the economic liberalization because of the political weight of the industrialization in the country (ibid., p. 196) but his follower, Julio César Turbay Ayala, who assumed the presidency in 1978, continued on the road of economic opening. He also created extensive social programme known as *Programa Nacional de Integración* (PIN) which can be considered quite effective and redistributive (ibid., p. 198). This programme also represented the early mentioned hopes for business opportunities for the Finns.

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<sup>46</sup> "Kun Kolumbia antaa Suomelle ehdotuksestamme paremmat rahoitusedut kuin kenellekään muulle maalle" (UM, I/77)

<sup>47</sup> On another less flattering note it can also be stated that his government created the base for the laundering of drug money as the National Bank of Colombia create a mechanism which permitted the free exchange of dollars to pesos without the necessity to declare the origin of the funds (Cuevas, 1991)

In May 1978 a Finnish delegation, led by the Minister of Trade and Industry, Eero Rantala visited Colombia. As part of this delegation some of the “most important economic and industrial leaders” (UM, 16/1-79) visited the country. As tended to be the recurring theme in the Finno-Colombian trade relations, the Finnish delegation draw attention to the imbalance of trade and the Ministers from both countries signed a note recognising its existence (ibid). However, Risto Veltheim, who acted as the secretary of the delegation, has since stated that the visit of the delegation “did not lead to any concrete results [as] the Colombians knew that the coffee was bought by roasteries, not the state and that the *colombian mild*-variety was the absolute favourite of the Finnish coffee drinkers”<sup>48</sup> (Veltheim, 2016, p. 301).

In 1979 the Finno-Colombian relationships reached their peak, as president Turbay Ayala visited Finland on an unofficial visit on his way to Soviet Union. This visit was due to a personal invitation of Erkki Alhanko, who had been extraordinarily active in creating relationships with the leading Colombian politicians (Alhanko, 2007, p. 208). During his visit the Colombian leader was received by the Prime Minister Mauno Koivisto in a night reception (Pajari, 2018) as well as for a lunch in the Presidential Palace by the President Urho Kekkonen. During the lunch, the Presidents discussed the bilateral relations and Kekkonen praised Colombia as “a great Latin American democracy which fights strongly for its economic development after having secured its democratic institutions”<sup>49</sup>. In the private meeting the Presidents negotiated the creation of a mixed commission for further investigating the possibilities for cooperation and bilateral trade and a creation of Agreement on Cooperation in Economic, Industrial and Technical matters (EIT) (Turbay Alaya, 1979 p. 130).

According to the Finnish sources, the suggestion for the commission came from the Colombian President and the Finns felt that “despite of its distant location, Colombia can be seen as potential country for imports” (UM 1/9-79) and the suggestion was approved. According to the Foreign Ministry’s documents, the Finnish side hoped to include professional know-how about forest industry and education to the agreement

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<sup>48</sup> “[...] ei se mihinkään konkreettiseen tulokseen johtanut. Kolumbialaiset tiesivät, että kahvin ostavat paahtamot eikä valtio ja että colombian mild -laatu oli suomalaisten kahvinjuojien ehdoton suosikki.” (Veltheim, 2016, p. 301)

<sup>49</sup> “La gran democracia latinoamericana que lucha esforzadamente por su desarrollo económico, después de haber afianzado sus instituciones democráticas” (Turbay Alaya, 1979, p. 130)

(ibid). The Finns were also reluctant to sign an agreement that would not address the imbalance of trade directly (UM, 33/292, 1979). The Colombian view on the disproportionate trade was that the “[Finnish] exporters had not demonstrated sufficient capacity to penetrate to the Colombian market”<sup>50</sup> (Turbay Alaya, 1979 p. 130).

It is worth noting, that during the same year Finland was also engaged in negotiation about a similar agreement with Argentina. In order to start the negotiation with Colombia, the first meeting of the commission was held in Bogota in November 1979 after which the agreement was initiated.

In an agreement, both countries agreed that the trade had been growing in a satisfactory manner, even though it had been imbalanced since 1969 in a way which profited Colombia. Both countries agreed that the trade, which stood at 35 million dollars for the first half of 1979, did not reflect its real potential. The Colombians expressed their wish to find manners to increase the Finnish imports to the country and suggested special import licenses that could be granted to Finnish products on top of the generally lowered customs. This could be seen as part of the general Colombian policy to move towards free trade after decades of protectionism. As coffee formed 90% of the Colombian exports to Finland, its importance was also underlined in the agreement. Both sides agreed that it was desirable that the Finnish coffee purchases would continue and increase in the future (UM, 33/292, 1979).

The reality, however was going to be somewhat different. As a result of Colombia signing the GATT, by 1980, only 56% of the imports were subject to licensing. However, the opening of the trade had led to unfavourable economic developments the licence requirements were further expanded (UM, 33/1983). This meant that, the Colombian trade relationship with several countries remained unbalanced. The Finnish delegation felt that the economic opportunities were further hindered by the fact that Colombia had trade agreements with Spain and several socialist states which required it to balance the trade by buying products from those countries. Trade agreements of this sort did not exist between Finland and Colombia (ibid.)

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<sup>50</sup> [...] *todavía los exportadores de su país no han mostrado suficiente capacidad para penetrar en el mercado colombiano.*” (ibid.)

## 5.4 1980: The years of political change and opening the embassies

In Finland in the start of the 1980's saw an enormous political shift in Finland as President Urho Kekkonen, who had governed Finland in a formally parliamentary system which was, in reality, heavily tilted towards the President<sup>51</sup> for almost three decades, renounced his presidency due to health concerns in 1981. The acting Prime Minister, Mauno Koivisto, was elected as the 9<sup>th</sup> President of the Finnish Republic by the decision of electoral college in 1982. He continued his predecessor's foreign policy until the collapse of the Soviet Union,<sup>52</sup> but also transformed the Finnish political system to a more parliamentary direction by giving up many presidential powers in favour of the Prime Minister as well as reduced the significance of the President in the country's foreign politics (Volanen, 2016, p. 466). This created a new style of stability in the Finnish politics in which governments were able to serve their full term and possibilities for long term political planning improved greatly (Miettunen, 2017).

Meanwhile, economically Finland was living a boom in the 1980's. The foreign credit, which was previously regulated by the Finnish Bank, was liberated in 1986. This led to rapid economic growth but also large-scale company indebtment from foreign lenders and eventually the overheating of the economy<sup>53</sup> (Taloustieto). During the years of growth many Finnish companies created fusions together and with foreign companies thus expanding their operations abroad.

In Colombia, the late 1970's had seen the rise of the drug trade, but in the start of the 1980's the apparition of cocaine refined it to the form which has since played a marking role in all sectors of the Colombian society and politics. In the beginning of the decade cocaine rose to replace cannabis as the illicit crop of choice for the drug dealers of the

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<sup>51</sup> Kekkonen was re-elected four times between 1956 and 1981, once by term extensions by emergency law instead of elections. His was able to use his personal relationship with Soviet Union as a strong motivation to keep him in power as there were fears of aggressive politics from the Soviet side, which could threaten the Finnish independence and it was believed Kekkonen could manage this threat (see e.g. Vihavainen et al, 2017 or the biography of Urho Kekkonen series by Juhani Suomi).

<sup>52</sup> Mainly meaning the so-called Paasikivi-Kekkonen doctrine which aimed to keep Finland as an independent sovereign, democratic and capitalist country through "active neutrality" in foreign affairs but also with emphasized friendship with the Soviet Union (see e.g. Suomalainen & Okker, 1974 or Väyrynen, 2016 p. 425).

<sup>53</sup> Because of the new loans from abroad the money circulating in the national system rose rapidly which in turn increased the price of apartments and business properties creating a real estate and stock market bubble as well as large fortunes, based on loaned money. This often referred to as "casino economy" or *kasinotalous* in Finnish

region.<sup>54</sup> The drug mafias in Colombia, Peru, Mexico and Bolivia had already been born in the late 1970's because of the increasing consumption of cocaine especially in the United States, and these activities found fertile ground in Colombia thanks to the long-standing business traditions of smuggling contraband and tax evasion (Palacios, 2006, p. 204). There was also an already-in-place-infrastructure to transport the product to United States in some regions, thanks to the *bonanza marimbera* (Semana, 1982). These tendencies facilitated the spread of drug trafficking as a potential business opportunity, which ended encompassing all social classes and thousands of people in organized networks, which were, of course, controlled by powerful cartels (Palacios, 2006, p. 242). In the 1982 Colombia was already a significant producer of cocaine to the global markets and its market share was greatly increased by ambitious businessmen especially from Medellin and Cali, such as Pablo Escobar.

Cartel leaders such as Escobar viewed themselves largely as respectable businessmen and sought political influence on top of economic success by trying to legitimate the drug business. They also invested money in large social projects and became esteemed characters in their communities where the source of their richness was largely not known (Entel, 2009). Their growing influence did provoke some opposition from politicians, but many adopted a permissive stand to the drug traffickers' money and influence (Palacios, 2006, p. 204). As Turbay's regime focused on the foreign trade liberalization as well as new social programmes, it also had a negative impact on the country's security situation and drug trafficking issues. The policies of economic liberalization meant that it was also easier for the drug money to enter Colombia (ibid., p. 199).

The cartels, however were not the only ones taking advantage of the economic opportunities of the drug trade. The guerrilla organisations also saw an opportunity to fund their struggle and got increasingly involved in the coca production, this, in part then, fuelled the increase of guerrilla activities in the country. The result of this was the changing nature of the Colombian guerrilla warfare, as well as ever increasing human

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<sup>54</sup> The *bonanza marimbera* or "marijuana bonanza" had started in the mid 1975 when North Americans discovered that high quality marijuana could be produced in the Caribbean region of Colombia, thus creating the drug industry in the country. It is estimated that up to 300 000 families turned to cannabis production in the 1970's and in 1978 90% of the cannabis consumed in the United States came from Colombia (Semana, 1982).

right concerns: as the cocaine and ransoming oil companies became the major source of income for FARC and ELN (Gaqueta, 2003 s. 76) it boosted the organizations' economic resources and thus appeal especially amongst the marginalized youth. Simultaneously, as the organizations grew in power, the Colombian government deployed harsher means in combating their activities. In Amnesty International's reports from 1980 there were accounts of 50 different forms of torture and some six hundred cases of military abuses (Palacios, 2006, p. 198). Turbay's government also faced another international image problem when it broke off relations with Cuba in 1981 following the discovery that the Cuban regime had offered military training to the Colombian guerrilla fighters (ibid., p. 199).

Belisario Betancur Cuartas, elected as president in 1982, sought to relive the growing international tension by shifting focus from the Cold War aspects of the Colombian foreign policy to more domestic matters and concentrate especially on decreasing the guerrilla activities. Betancur's means of doing this was formulating an amnesty and pardon programme for guerrillas who gave up arms or, in other words, a "democratic opening" after the repressive years of Turbay's government. The policy was fairly effective in creating a ceasefire with FARC in 1982, but unfortunately this truce did not last: in the end only 10% of FARC's troops demobilized and this was followed by a violent backlash from the paramilitary troops<sup>55</sup> against the members of political wing of the movement, *Unión Patriótica*, in the following years (Guáqueta, 2003, p. 76). As this violent counter reaction demonstrated, the policy of peace proved increasingly complicated, not just because of external pressure from the United States which demanded for stronger measures against the drug trafficking, but also because of the strong opposition from domestic press, business leaders, political class as well as the military (ibid., 201). In order to demonstrate to the leftist guerrillas that the government was leaving the polarized Cold War orientation behind, Betancur brought Colombia to a closer alignment with the Nonaligned countries, but this also proved extremely unpopular at home (ibid., p. 206). Additionally, FARC interpreted the attacks against its members as a violation of the ceasefire causing the armed conflict to continue and intensify further in the years to come.

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<sup>55</sup> See p. 54

#### 5.4.1 Opening of the Embassies

If the internal politics of Colombia were turbulent at the start of the decade, in the Finnish-Colombian relations a significant step was taken when the EIT Agreement was signed in Bogota in front of TV cameras in 1980 and ratified in 1981. In his note from 1981 the Finnish Ambassador in Lima, accredited to Colombia, Seppo Pietinen expressed how friendly the relations between the two countries were and that a ministerial visit was agreed for the same year (UM 13/2-81). The vice-President of Colombia, Víctor Mosquera Chaux stated that his country was very interested in improving its relations with small democratic countries, such as Finland because Colombia was going through a period of strong democratic development (ibid.). Ambassador Pietinen agreed that Finland also wished to advance the relationship between the two countries and that Colombia was known in all parts of the country from its excellent coffee (ibid.). In his note Pietinen also marks that:

*Even if one peels off the abundant South-American froth from the surface, the Colombians [really] do feel certain sympathy towards our country. [...] The trade imbalance has been noted on an influential level and our role as a significant coffee purchaser gives us the possibility to develop the trade relations in a more balanced way on an expense of the vice of the Finnish people - the coffee drinking<sup>56</sup> (UM 13/2-81, p. 4).*

Later in 1981 the Minister of Foreign trade, Esko Rekola, visited Colombia with his delegation meeting with President Turbay who was pleased to remember his time spent in Finland (UM 21/4-81). Finland was interested in finding ways to balance the trade, but also to “explore opportunities to profit from Colombia’s coal reserves because of the changed situation in Poland” (ibid). The delegation received a “heartfelt welcome” and many Colombians indicated that Colombia was looking to diversify its economic relations especially to the direction of the Nordic countries; Finland was seen as a prime candidate because of its “desire for independence, wise foreign policy and

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<sup>56</sup> “[...] että vaikka runsas eteläamerikkalainen pintavaahto kuoritaan lausumista pois, maamme kohtaan tunnetaan Kolumbiassa määrättyä sympatiaa. [...] kauppamme epätasapaino on tiedostettu vaikutustasolla, ja merkittävä asiakasroolimme kahvin ostajana antaa meille mahdollisuuden taloudellisten suhteiden kehittämiseen tasapainoisempaan suuntaan Suomen kansan paheen - kahvinjuonnin - kustannuksella.” (UM 13/2-81, p. 4)

advanced technology” (ibid.). Ambassador Pietinen does note however, that: “It is, however, a different - and quite laborious - task to transform these comments into concrete economic cooperation”<sup>57</sup> (ibid.). It seems that Ambassador Pietinen was correct in this statement, as the active Colombian foreign policy had its focus firmly in its own geopolitical region in the coming years (UM, 20/1-82).

In 1981 Colombia was the second most important trade partner for Finland in Latin America, after Brazil and 39% of all Finnish coffee imports came from Colombia. Finland was mainly exporting products of the wood processing industry as well as some chemical products (Alhanko, 2009, p. 135) The positive economic developments meant that Finland had increased interests in having representation in Colombia and, as Colombia had previously manifested its interest to fortify its own commercial representation in Finland through opening an Embassy,<sup>58</sup> in 1981 the Finnish government announced its plans to open an independent mission to Bogota. Colombia reciprocated the gesture and both countries opened their embassies in the following year. Erkki Pajari<sup>59</sup>, a career diplomat, was named as the Ambassador of Finland in Bogota to his first ambassador position and Alfonso Venegas Leyva, also a career diplomat, was named Chargé d’Affaires a.i. in Helsinki (Koskela et al. 2016, p. 86).

In his first report from the newly founded Embassy Pajari stated that, for some reason or another, he found the establishing of the Finnish Embassy very difficult. He also noted that despite the “apparently democratic system a very significant portion of the population is left completely out of the political life”<sup>60</sup>. To the Finnish ambassador, the Colombian foreign orientation seemed “of low profile and without a coherent foreign policy [with] the focal points of activity mostly on the immediate surrounding; Andean group, Organization of American States and Caribbean region”<sup>61</sup>. Pajari also described that the strong legalistic thinking in the internal affairs was also reflected on the

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<sup>57</sup> “*Lienee kuitenkin jo toinen ja varsin työteliäs tehtävä näiden lausuntojen muuntamisessa konkreettiseksi taloudelliseksi yhteistyöksi.*” UM 21/4-81

<sup>58</sup> Colombia had already presented the idea of opening the Embassies in the 1970’s as it was felt that managing the Nordic affairs from London was cumbersome as the economic activity increased in the Nordic countries (Koskela, Lahe & Ridanpää, 2016, p. 86)

<sup>59</sup> No relation to the Honorary consuls of Colombia in Finland.

<sup>60</sup> “[...] *sinänsä demokraattisesta järjestelmästä huolimatta hyvin suuri kansanosaa jää kokonaan poliittisen elämän ulkopuolelle*” (UM/20.9.1982)

<sup>61</sup> “*Kolumbian ulkopoliittinen profiili on melkoisen matala, ja että mitään erityisempää johdonmukaista linjaa ulkopoliitiikan alalta on vaikea löytää. Aktiviteetin painopisteet ovat lähiympäristössä: ns. Andien ryhmä, Amerikan valtioiden [sic] järjestö ja Karibian alue koetaan tärkeinä.*” (UM/20.9.1982)



country's foreign policy. The ambassador also stated that there was "a lot of "loose" currency in the country as a result of drug exports and this kept the exchange of peso lower on the black market than it was according to the official exchange rates"<sup>62</sup> (UM/20.9.1982) The impact of the drug trade on the Colombian economy was thus evident to the Finnish representation right from the start of the mission.

From his part, in a report made by Colombian Chargé d'Affaires Venegas in 1983, he mentions that the government of Colombia set as his first task the improvement of the commercial relationship between Colombia and Finland. He expressed his interest to find out about the Finnish views on the obstacles hindering the trade as well as the interests in investments and joint ventures (UM/14.9.83). The Finnish government responded his enquiry by stating that:

*"commercial activity had suffered from the strict import licensing and the required procedures [which] have caused substantial delays in delivery of some [...] products to Colombia. The relatively high level of certain custom duties, as well as import deposits, are regarded to form a barrier to trade. Moreover, bilateral agreement with some countries on abolishing [sic] the import deposits have decreased the competitiveness of Finnish exports."* (UM 1982/7.7.83)

Even though the Colombians had assured Finland about their special status in the trade markets, the reality was, as stated above, that there were countries which had more favourable bilateral agreements, such as United States and Spain. Already in 1981 Alhanko had in his letter to the Foreign Ministry of Finland, suggested that Finland should request "the same benefits as Spain, especially by removing the 35% import deposit" (Alhanko, 2009, p. 135).

As stated before, Colombia moved away from easing the import regulation and this also affected the bilateral trade with Finland despite the positive step of opening the embassies. As the country's economy started to dwindle in the 1980's as a result of the globally falling coffee prices after the global recession, it experienced balance payment problems and in order to save its foreign exchange reserves, the Colombian

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<sup>62</sup> "Löysää" valuutta on ennätysmäisen huumeviennin ansiosta maassa niin paljon, että peson musta kurssi on virallista kurssia alhaisempi.

government took steps back from the free trade (US Library of Congress.) It extended the licensing requirements and in just three years, some 80% of the products were subject to import licenses in 1983. The Finns also noted, that the economic problem for the country was not so much the imported products but the low demand of its exports (UM/33/83), but nevertheless felt the impact of harsher import regulations which also affected their exports.

Even though Finland was the 7<sup>th</sup> biggest coffee buyer, the countries still did not have bilateral agreements which obligated Colombia to buy exports products to balance the trade. In the conditions of new trade policy, this significantly complicated the exportation of Finnish products to the Colombian markets (UM/33/83). Licenses for Finnish products were revoked, denied and reduced and the Finnish representation noted that the problem was structural:

*“In part we export products which do not fit the current Colombian import policy. [...] The leader of Incomex let us know directly that if we found products which were now imported from the countries with trade deficit with Colombia (mentioned United States and Brazil as such) and which we can offer in economically competitive terms, Incomex<sup>63</sup> is ready with licensing forbid their import from other sources and transfer the purchases to Finland”<sup>64</sup> (UM 29.8.1983)*

In the light of this promise, the Finns judged that it was beneficial to maintain the unbalanced trade with Colombia as the “Colombian officials had a completely bilateral view on trade deficits and surplus which apparently can be of some benefits in certain conditions<sup>65</sup>”. Because of this, Finland started to scout options for buying other Colombian products, apart from coffee (ibid.) Possibilities of opening a credit line<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Colombian Institute for Foreign Trade (*Instituto Colombiano de Comercio Exterior*)

<sup>64</sup> “*Viemme osittain tuotteita, jotka eivät sovellu Kolumbian nykyisen tuontipolitiikkaan. [...] Incomexin pääjohtaja ilmoitti suoraan, että mikäli löydämme tuotteita, joita nyt tuodaan Kolumbian alijäämämaista (mainitsi nimeltä Yhdysvallat ja Brasilian) ja joita voimme tarjota kaupallisesti kilpailukykyisin ehdoin, on Incomex valmis lisensoinnilla kieltämään niiden tuonnin muista lähteistä ja siirtämään ostot Suomeen.*” UM 29.8.1983

<sup>65</sup> “*Koska Kolumbian viranomaisilla on ulkomaankauoan [sic] vajeisiin ja ylijäämiin täysin bilateraallinen näkemys, josta tietyissä olosuhteissa näköjään saatetaan hyötyäkin*” (ibid).

<sup>66</sup> A financial facility allowing the beneficiary to draw down the financial contribution, which can be totally or partially reimbursable, in relation to the expenditure paid by the beneficiary and supported by receipted invoices or accounting documents of equivalent probative value.

from the Finnish trade association to the Banco Cafetero was also discussed (UM/7.5.1984).

The mixed commission established in 1981, continued its works to improve the bilateral trade and in a round of meetings in Helsinki in 1986 it was noted that “both sides noted with satisfaction the favourable development between the two countries” and that “opportunities to expand and deepen these mutually beneficial relations were identified on both sides” (UM/26.6.1986). Concretely the commission stated the need to diversify trade and Finns expressed their hope to find new ways of promoting trade in Colombia. The Colombian side assured that widening imports gave better access also to Finnish goods and offered their collaboration on the matter. Colombia also had problems with custom duties on its export products to Finland (coffee and flowers) and this was agreed on the agenda of next round of GATT meeting. The possibility of expanding the coal trade<sup>67</sup> from Colombia to Finland was also discussed, as well as several industrial projects in Colombia to which Finnish companies had interest in participating. Potential industrial cooperation was also identified on forestry and forest industries, energy production and distribution, transportation and material handling, agricultural machinery, shipbuilding and the health sector (ibid.)

The Finns considered that the trade between the two countries was in a “critical point of growth”, as there was a significant increase in imports and exports planned for the next two years. This would have let to Colombia assuming the position of Finland’s biggest trading partner in Latin America. It was noted that several projects agreed during the meetings required close observation by officials familiar with the particularities of the bilateral trade between the countries and the role of the embassies was thus greatly emphasised (UM 19.3.86).

In October the Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade, Jermu Laine, inaugurated the Finnish Technical Days in Bogotá<sup>68</sup> (*Symposio Finlandia Tecnologica 86*), stating in his speech that the reason for the imbalance of trade was that “the Finnish technology

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<sup>67</sup> This was a new product on between the countries, starting from 1983 and already contributing 20% of the Colombian exports to Finland in 1986 (UM 24.4.1986)

<sup>68</sup> The theme of the event was ports and their technical requirements, energy and the forest industry and it included participation from 23 Finnish companies and 500 Colombian ones

was not known well enough in Latin America”.<sup>69</sup> This event was the first of its kind, organized in order to promote the Finnish exports in South America, and attracted wide interest from the Colombian companies (UM 7.10.86). During his visit, Laine also met with Alfonso Merino, the Colombian Minister of Development, as part of the first meeting on the evaluation of the progress of the mixed commission. A product of this meeting was an Act of Economic Bilateral Cooperation.

Colombia was already the third biggest coal importer to Finland at this point after Poland and the Soviet Union, but this also meant that the trade imbalance was getting worse from the Finnish point of view: from the estimated value of the bilateral trade, Finland was responsible for just one fifth (*ibid.*).<sup>70</sup> It should also be stated however, that in 1985 Colombia represented just 0,6% of the total imports of Finland and out of all the Colombian products imported, coffee continued to be by far the most significant.<sup>71</sup> Finland was also struggling to introduce new products to the Colombian market and only exported the traditional paper and chemical products (UM 21.2.1986). In 1987 there were some hopes for a large joint venture between Finland, Soviet Union and Colombia to build a ground gas pipe to Colombia and President Barco invited a Finnish delegation to Colombia to discuss the project (UM 18.12.1987). For one reason or another, the project was never realised. However, there were other industrial projects with Finnish company involvement (UM 3.12.1986).

#### 5.4.2 Spiral of violence intensifies in Colombia

After the mid-80, the security situation in Colombia became critical. A turning point in the flourishing drug business and its close connection to the Colombian politics came in 1984 when, after increasing pressure from the US government and a fraction headed by Luis Carlos Galán in the New Liberal Party, the Justice Minister Rodrigo Lara Bonilla took a strong stand against the drug industry, branding those involved publicly for the first time and ordered the destruction one of the Medellin Cartel's largest laboratories. He also brought increasing pressure in order to bring those involved in the illegal activities to face the justice in Colombia and in the United States. This stance proved

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<sup>69</sup> “[...] *ettei suomalainen teknologia ole riittävästi tunnettu Latinalaisessa Amerikassa.*” (UM 7.10.86)

<sup>70</sup> The value was estimated at 600 million Finnish marks in October 1986

<sup>71</sup> Other imports were bananas, fresh carnations and iron

to be fatal as it led to his assassination, making him the only Minister victim of the narco-violence (Bushnell, 1993, p. 262). The attack to the Palace of Justice in 1985 by the Marxist M-19, which targeted the President but left 25 Supreme Court Justices dead, was a clear sign that the country had slid to extraordinary levels of violence (Livingston, 2004, p. 55).

As the violence in the cities intensified, the newly elected Liberal president Virgilio Barco Vargas recognised in 1986 that poverty and social injustice were in fact the biggest obstacle in resolving the country's issues: one quarter of the population lived in extreme poverty and this had a serious effect on the country's ability for economic growth and it also fuelled the conflict and disrupted the democratic institutions (Palacios, 2006, p. 209). The national development plan drafted by Barco's government sought to reduce primary school dropout rates, to improve the healthcare infrastructure and create national system of child-care centres for working mothers from poor neighbourhoods. The government's plan could be described as "circular" as "the effects of poverty were perhaps confused with its causes" and it did not "broach the issue of Colombia's social structure... [which] ...created such widespread poverty" (ibid.).

Despite best intended efforts, during Barco's presidency 1986-1990 the government failed to solve the issues fuelling the violence in any significant manner and, as a result, the country's economic development did not reach the hoped levels. Even though the Finns had hopes for the reopening of the economy in 1985 (UM 21.2.1986), the violence as well as the low price of coffee in the global markets hindered the economic growth of the country and thus did not support this kind of economic policy in Colombia. The potentially promising oil industry also faced serious issues as the armed groups, especially ELN, carried out attacks to the oil export pipelines, which significantly reduced the government's revenues from that industry as well. The attacks on the oil lines also created a lucrative business of ransoming foreign companies for their workers, making Colombia an even more complicated destination for foreign companies and investors (Gaqueta, 2003, p. 85).

The attacks against the oil industry also exaggerated the violence further as it created a conflict between the guerrilla groups: ELN and FARC started to combat over the

control of the oil rich territories extending the guerrilla warfare to new territories outside the traditional coca producing states and thus worsening the security situations for civilians. Whenever the guerrillas gained the control of new areas, they also spread the practise of coca cultivation, boosting the production and feeding the ever-growing drug trafficking business. The country was suffering then, from widespread urban and political violence, which was now even more extreme in the countryside (Palacios, 2006, p. 211).

As this violence raged the drug trafficking augmented and the drug barons became more and more powerful. All attempts from the government's side to control the situation had proved insufficient and in 1989 Barco announced a new "peace initiative" in which drug trade was recognised as a political issue centred on the policy question of extradition, but also separated from political crimes which were contributed for "altruistic motives" (Palacios, 2006, p. 211). This distinction mattered, because it put the drug lords to different legal and moral category from the guerrillas and the initiative had some initial success as the leftist M-19, weakened by the military, agreed to restart peace negotiation and finally surrendered its arms in 1990.<sup>72</sup> The Maoist EPL also made peace with the government in 1991. This development, even if positive, did unfortunately little to resolve the issue with the leftist guerrillas as a whole as the strongest groups, ELN and FARC did not only stay out of any possible peace negotiation but had also combined their forces in the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordinating group in 1987.

There was also an amplified response from the right wing to these increasing guerrilla activities. As the drug barons had become landowners, they started to create private armies in order to protect their property from the guerrillas trying to take control of it. These armed groups of civilians worked in close cooperation not only with the drug barons, but also with other large landowners, local leaders and the military (Chernick, 2007). These groups were based on the paramilitary organisations established already from the 1960's onwards as the landowners' response to the guerrilla movements but in the 1980's the previously limited scope organisations took a new form (Arnson, 2005,

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<sup>72</sup> Finnish lieutenant colonel Ermei Kanninen participated in the signing of the Peace Agreement as part of the delegation of the Socialists International, a worldwide association of socialist and social-democratic parties (UM 12.7.1990).

p. 1-2). This led to an explosion of the violence in the countryside as the paramilitary groups and guerrilla battled over control of different areas, leaving civilians not only in the midst of the conflict but now also victims of political cleansings.

## 5.5 1990: Violence and recession affect the relations

The start of the 1990's saw an economic crisis in Finland. As mentioned before, the debt-based economic boom and speculation lead into the overheating of the economy and the bursting of the bubble. As a result of the collapse of two banks, mutually owned central institution SKOP (*Säästöpankkien keskusosakepankki*) and STS (*Suomen Työväen Säästöpankki*) and interest rate shock which hit the Nordic countries, the Government had to interfere in 1992 in order to prevent a credit crunch<sup>73</sup> and give 8 billion Finnish marks (approximately 1,2 billion euros) zero-interest convertible loan to Finnish banks as well as establish a Government Guarantee Fund (*Valtion vakuusrahasto*) to support the savings banks (Sandal, p. 86). This development was similar in all Nordic countries, but the Finnish crisis was the most severe Nordic banking crisis and cost the country roughly 8% of its GNP. The bank crisis was accompanied with soaring unemployment rates (from 3 to 16%) and the country fell into deep recession (Sandal, p. 83). The effects of this recession were felt all through the decade (Taloussanomat, 2000).

To make economic matters more complicated, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant the end of the clearing trade agreement and reduction of the Finnish trade with its eastern neighbour. On the other hand, this political change did bring new possibilities to the Finnish foreign policy. The strict neutrality policy in international matters had already started to shift in the late 1980's as Mihail Gorbachev assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union. When visiting Finland in 1989 he assured the Finnish Government that the country could decide freely about its membership in the European Communities (see e.g. Saukkonen, 2003) and, as a result, Finland became a full member later that year. In 1992, The Agreement of Friendship, Understanding and Cooperation with the Soviet Union came to its end and Finland was able to shift its focus more towards gaining the membership in the European Union.

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<sup>73</sup> A sudden reduction in the general availability of loans or tightening of the loan conditions

In Colombia, the situation of disorder and violence continued in the turn of the decade. As the government sought to negotiate with the guerrillas, such option was not available in the case of the drug cartels. In 1989 another high profile political assassination, that of Luis Carlos Galán - a charismatic leader of New Liberalism and one of the favourites in the 1990 presidential elections who had taken strong stances against the infiltration of drug cartels to the Colombian politics<sup>74</sup> - lead the Barco administration to launch an unprecedented attack against the drug barons: 10 000 persons were arrested in two weeks and 550 properties were confiscated (Palacios, 2006, p. 212). This operation also brought to light an even clearer picture of how extensive and pervasive the links between illegal and legal economies were and how difficult it would be to solve the issue with purely military means (ibid). Of course, the government's crackdown created a strong counter reaction from the cartels' leaders and the Medellin cartel declared total war stating that it would switch from targeted violence against government officials to "burning and destroying the oligarchy industries and properties" (ibid). This war came in the form of bomb attacks as well as demands of repayment for all the debts amongst the political class. In the "free-fire zone" that followed prominent political figures were killed but the government also succeeded in eliminating some of the most notorious cartel leaders. In the 1990's the "extraditables" seemed to see the futility of their attempt to overpower the government through violence and reiterated their promise to give up trafficking and turn in their laboratories and arms if they would get guarantees that they would not be handed over to the US authorities but judged in Colombia (Palacios, 2006, p. 213).

In the midst of this, 1990 was also a year for Presidential elections in Colombia and the Finnish ambassador Risto Rekola's report on the matter gives a good image on the political situation and violence in the country:

*"The [Presidential] campaign has been held in the shadow of an internal political crisis [as well as] drug and guerrilla war. Three presidential candidates have been murdered. [...] Violence, bomb attacks, murders and kidnapping have*

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<sup>74</sup> César Gaviria Trujillo, an economist by profession who had previously served as a Minister of Economy and followed the political footsteps of the assassinated Galán was elected as the new president



*continued. [...] The root cause for the problems are probably in the social discontent: inequality and injustice. On the other hand, the power of the drug money is incomprehensible. One can buy anything with it, but especially services from people starting from politicians to the police and soldiers and finishing with the “unemployed” professional killers of the side alleys of Medellin.*<sup>75</sup>

*The most incredible thing about this situation is, that the country’s economy has not collapsed. It has somewhat suffered but there are no signs of recession. The country still pays its debts without delay. There is trade, and everything is obtainable”*<sup>76</sup> (UM 25.5.1990).

According to ambassador emeritus Mikko Pyhälä (2018), it was this worsening cycle of violence that led to the final decision to close the Finnish Embassy in Bogotá two years later. In the internal documents of the Ministry, the reason named for the closure were budget reasons (UM 25.1.1993). It should also be stated, that there is no doubt that the recession that hit the country also played a role and caused Finland to reduce the number of its diplomatic missions but there is also little logic in doubting that the unstable situation of the country together with the imbalanced trade were the fundamental reasons which led to the selection of the Embassy in Colombia to be amongst those to be closed. The representation of Finland in Colombia was done from Caracas from 1993 onwards. However, it is interesting to note, that these years in the early 1990’s are the only ones during which the Colombian Embassy in Finland was headed by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Nicolas Salom Franco.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> The ambassador is most likely referring to members of the urban youth gangs in the poor neighborhoods of Medellín, many of whom were recruited and trained in “hitman schools” by the drug cartels (Palacios, 2006, p. 241).

<sup>76</sup> *Kamppanja on käyty sisäpoliittisen kriisin, huume - ja sissisodan varjossa. Kolme presidenttiehdokasta on murhattu [...] väkivalta, pommi-iskut, murhat ja kidnappaukset ovat jatkuneet [...] Ongelmien perussyy lienevät yhteiskunnallisessa tyytymättömyydessä: eriarvoisuudessa ja epäoikeudenmukaisuudessa. Toisaalta huumeran voima on käsittämätön. Sillä voi ostaa mitä vain, mutta varsinkin ihmisten palveluja poliitikoista poliisista ja sotilaista lähtien aina Medellínin syrjäkatujen “työttömiin” ammattitappajiin.*

*Ihmeellisintä tässä tilanteessa on, että maan talous ei ole romahtanut. Se on kärsinyt jonkin verran, mutta merkkejä lamasta ei ole. Maa maksaa edelleen velkansa ilman viiveitä. Kauppa käy ja kaikkea on saatavilla.”* (UM 25.5.1990)

<sup>77</sup> Salom was most likely a political appointment as was not a career diplomat but a marine biologist

His follower, Jose Neira Rey who arrived in 1994 was named Chargé d’Affaires a.i. as were all his predecessors (Neyra, 1994, p.11).<sup>78</sup>

There are little sources on the bilateral relationship between the countries during the 1990’s despite the fact that Colombia maintained its embassy open in Helsinki until 2002. The Embassy was headed, as mentioned, by chargé d’affaires instead of ambassadors and “suffered from the lack of continuity” (Koskela et al., 2016, p. 86). The Chargé d’Affaires a.i., Jose Neira Rey (1994, p. 209), notes that the trade deficit was still painfully evident, and that Colombia could have done more in promoting institutional and economical rapprochement with Finland. He also states, that Finland represented many interesting opportunities for Colombia, especially now that the country was on the point of joining the European Union. However, the Head of mission’s ideas on how to realise this operation were largely based on the traditional product of choice; coffee (ibid. p. 215).

At the same time, his home country was going through changes in the economic structure: by 1990 coffee exports fell from 80% of the country’s total export to just 20%, being replaced by petroleum derivatives and coal as well as illicit drugs (Palacios, 2006, p. 221). Colombia was also going through even larger social changes with lowering birth rate, child mortality and illiteracy and growing industrialization, GDP and urbanization (ibid., p. 220-26). Whilst millions had immigrated outside the country to escape the violence, many also immigrated in the cities which changed Colombia’s profile from rural, regionally divided country to one with more urban population and strengthened idea of nationhood (ibidi., p. 226). The country also passed a new constitution in 1991, which replaced the previous one from 1886. This constitution was called the Constitution of Rights and it aimed to be more socially inclusive. This mixture of growth, development and extreme violence truly made the 1990’s a peculiar decade in Colombia, which could be defined by Palacio’s (2006, p. 243) words: “the economy is doing well even though the country is doing badly”.

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<sup>78</sup> More on the discussion of why this might be found further along

In Finland on the other hand, the former career diplomat Martti Ahtisaari was elected as the president of the country recovering from the economic crisis in 1994. Shortly after his election, the Finns voted on the membership in the European Union and the country joined in 1995. This meant that Finland, the once obsessively neutral country tiptoeing the line between the east and the west was now firmly anchored to the European community and its policies. Finland also joined European Monetary Union and switched its currency to euro. According to former president of Finland, Tarja Halonen (Helsingin Sanomat, 2018), on the hindsight one of the biggest changes to the Finnish foreign policy that originated from the EU membership - apart from the obvious future commitment to the Union's unified foreign policy - was the ratification of the European Convention of Human Rights. At the time, Halonen acted as Foreign Minister in the cabinet of President Ahtisaari and created a human rights department to the Ministry<sup>79</sup> (ibid.). This change would prove to be very significant for the future foreign policy of Finland. Finland also lost some of its global importance and the special position as a mediator between the east and the west, (which especially Kekkonen and somewhat also Koivisto were eager to emphasise) with the collapse of the Soviet Union. (Mäntyvaara & Pulkkinen, 2016, p. 109) This further emphasized the need for a different orientation for the foreign policy.

President Halonen also states that Finland became slightly "near-sighted" about its foreign policy, with its eyes firmly fixed on the European issues, after the end of the Cold War. This was mainly caused by the fact that Finland joined the European Council and later the Union relatively recently in comparison with the other European nations (Mäntyvaara & Pulkkinen, 2016, p. 99). This was especially evident during the 1990's and, according to the former Minister for Foreign Affairs Paavo Väyrynen (2016 p. 429), Finland's focus did not truly re-shift to outside its own continent until the 2000's through EU's development programmes.

The end of the Agreement of Friendship, Understanding and Cooperation with the Soviet Union however meant that Finland could also have a more open security policy. In 1994 Finland signed a Partnership for Peace agreement with NATO but has maintained non-allied. This agreement, together with the EU membership has given

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<sup>79</sup> In fact, Finland had often been internationally criticized on its human rights stands and juridical processes which had been heavily influenced by the Soviet Union (see e.g., Salminen, 1999).

Finland the opportunity to participate UN mandate crisis management operations both under NATO and EU leadership (YK, 2016).

The EU membership created a somewhat problematic division of tasks in the Finnish Foreign Policy, as the president and the government, headed by the Prime Minister often had differing ideas on who was ultimately in charge of the Foreign Policy in general and represented the country on the highest-level Union meetings.<sup>80</sup> This situation was created by conflicting legislations which left much room for interpretation.<sup>81</sup> This so called “problem of two plates” was not fully resolved until the new constitution of 2000 was passed.

In Colombia, the foreign policy of president Ernesto Samper, elected in 1994, was based on three principles: pacific solutions of conflicts and the policy of non-intervention, integration with other Latin American countries, especially in the Caribbean region and looking for support from foreign investment in order to finance social projects at home (Pardo, 1994). However, these principles were not very popular with the United States or the neighbouring countries, and they seemed to isolate Colombia in its geopolitical region. Neither did they seem to be effective in combating the issue of drug trade which was now affecting other countries as well (El Tiempo, 6.10.1996). Colombia’s bilateral agenda with United States was mostly composed of measures to fight the war against drugs, even though the stands of the two countries about the nature of the armed conflict in Colombia were not always harmonious (Pardo, 1994). According to Sánchez, a Colombian political expert, despite the intention towards regional integration, Samper’s Colombia based its foreign policy largely on the principles of realism instead of forming strategic alliances and because of this, the country’s relationship with the European Union was also taking a strain (El Tiempo, 6.10.1996).

Despite their differences in the root cause of the conflict, the Colombian government, aided by the US, had been successful in its fight against the drug cartels, but not the drug business as such. The illicit trade moved more and more into the hands of the

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<sup>80</sup> Traditionally the President had been the head of foreign policy and the Foreign Ministry had reported directly to the Head of State (Mäntyvaara, 2016, p. 110)

<sup>81</sup> For more detailed explication on the contradictory legislation see Volanen, 2016, p. 467

paramilitary and guerrilla groups, thus making them the biggest issue affecting the country instead of the “traditional” drug cartels (Leguizamo, 2002, p. 11). When running for president, Andres Pastrana sustained negotiations with FARC for possible peace process. After he was elected in 1998, FARC agreed to begin the formal peace talks, which were then initiated the following year. Even though the first year was not very successful, especially because of the lack of decrease in violence (Leguizamo, 2002, p. 11), the negotiations were continued, and a new level of international participation was added.<sup>82</sup>

At the end of the decade Finland’s Foreign Ministry’s strategic planning for Latin America included the emphasis of the role of the EU as a significant actor in the continent alongside the US and the Finnish benefits in commercial and economic relations. The political priorities included values relating to stability and democracy, as defined in the framework of the EU (Kajaani, 1998, p. 81-81). As stated before, the human rights issues had also been elevated to a new importance in the Finnish foreign policy planning and this also influenced the Finnish involvement to the peace process started by president Andres Pastrana as part of Plan Colombia<sup>83</sup>.

Pastrana had included peacebuilding as well as human rights to the heart of this administration’s foreign policy and normalized the relationship with the European Union in 1998 (Cardona, 2001, p. 58). This being the case, the members of the Union were keen to form part of the peace process and in 2000 the peace negotiations took place in various European countries, including Sweden and Norway. Finland was not part of this first round of negotiations but expressed its interest to participate in the process (Feodorow, 2001, p. 113) and was included in the group of *Países amigos y Comisión Facilitadora de las Negociaciones* in 2001.

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<sup>82</sup> The mechanism of Facilitator Countries had already been introduced in Colombia in the peace negotiations between Samper’s government and the ELN in 1994 (Leguizamo, 2002, p. 10).

<sup>83</sup> Plan Colombia was, as defined by the president; “a set of alternative development projects which will channel the shared efforts of multilateral organizations and [foreign] governments towards Colombian society” (Pastrana, 2005, p. 48). This meant a sort of “Marshall help plan” to help combat the problems caused by cultivation of coca and eventually end the armed conflict. The programme ran until 2015 and the foreign financing came mainly from the US but, when considering the peace negotiations, also partly from the European Union.

Even though there was much optimism towards the peace negotiations, the results were not what was expected despite various meetings and negotiations facilitated by the Foreign Ministry as well as the Iberoamerican Institute of the University of Helsinki (Pärssinen, 2006, p. 7).

## 5.6 2000: New rapprochement

At the start of the new millennia, the former Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen was elected as the first female president of Finland. At the same time, in 2000, Finland passed the new constitution which further reduced the president's power and strengthened parliamentarism through the position of the Prime Minister. Since Halonen's presidency under the new constitution, one of the four Committees of Ministers of the Finnish government is the Committee on Foreign and Security Policy.<sup>84</sup> The Committee meets with the President (who is the head of the meeting) and the agenda of the meeting is decided by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and President meet weekly in order to discuss the Foreign Policy matters (and attempt to reach an agreement on the issues before the next Committee meeting). This means that the preparation of Foreign Policy lays within the responsibility of the Foreign Ministry as well as the Office of the Prime Minister, but the final policy is decided in cooperation with the President (Volanen, 2016, p. 467-475).

In bilateral and multilateral relationships, the legislation allows room for flexibility. The Prime Minister's role became more established during the early years of 2000 through Nordic cooperation as well as other bilateral and multilateral meetings. Especially Finland's EU Presidency of 2006 helped to solidify the Prime Minister's position also in the relations with Russia (which had, as stated before, been especially connected to the President). This link became even stronger after Vladimir Putin stepped down from the Presidency of Russia to serve as the Prime Minister of the country from 2008 to 2012 (ibid. p. 473).<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The others are Committee on European Union Affairs, Ministerial Finance Committee and Committee on Economic Policy

<sup>85</sup> It should be noted however, that the President's position became more established in Finnish Foreign Policy after Putin re-assumed the Presidency (ibid. p. 473)

In Colombia the start of the new millennia also meant changes to the country's foreign policy if not to the model of governance. Álvaro Uribe Vélez, a highly popular but also somewhat controversial candidate,<sup>86</sup> was elected as President of Colombia in 2002. Uribe "internationalized" the armed conflict in Colombia in a sense that seeking associates to fight the enemy effectively became the focus of the foreign policy. This has not been the case previously, as the internal conflict had not played an important role in the official foreign policy of the country (Rojas, 2006, p. 87). Thus, his presidency was characterized by stronger measures against the illegal armed groups in the country which also meant focusing the state's budget more on security measures. Already during the Pastrana's government there had been certain "positive narcotization"<sup>87</sup> of the Colombian foreign policy which left the other topics such as trade and cooperation in the side-lines (Cardona, 2001, p. 56). It seemed that the new elected President agreed with the notion that alongside the armed conflict, drugs were at the heart of the problem and that the solution could only be reached by concentrating the foreign policy efforts to the countries who could help to combat them. The international partners in the peace negotiations with FARC came to note that in this case as well Uribe's focus was not to continue talking with the guerrilla, but to crush them by military force. This also meant a closer relationship with United States in comparison with the previous administrations as a partner in war against the illicit drugs and provider of military equipment for the operations against the guerrilla (Rojas, 2006 p. 86). He named the armed organisations "narco-terrorists" which, in its parts, helped to motivate the US to invest resources to Colombia.<sup>88</sup>

As Uribe's focus was in the military spending, there was re-shifting of funds in the state's budget. As part of re-shifting the funds and promoting administrative austerity, Uribe closed several embassies abroad, including that of Helsinki in 2002. The Ambassador in Stockholm was from then on accredited to Finland. According to previous Chargé d'Affaires e.p. of Colombia, Fulvia Elvira Benavides, the decision to

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<sup>86</sup> Uribe is currently being investigated on several matters relating to illegal activities as well as political violence connected to the paramilitary troops

<sup>87</sup> A consensus in the that the drug trade was in the heart of the Colombian issues which could thus only be resolved through international co-operation (Cardona, 2001, p. 56)

<sup>88</sup> The Bush Administration of the United States was fighting the War on Terror after the terrorist attack on the WTC towers in New York on the 9th of September 2001.

cut funds specifically from the from the Foreign Ministry in budget cuts is usual in Colombia, given that the Ministry's budgets look extremely large when converted to pesos<sup>89</sup> and Helsinki was chosen as one of the mission to be closed as there were not enough commercial activity between the countries to justify the existence of the Embassy. It should also be stated with high levels of certainty, that perhaps more significantly, Finland did not represent a politically important country to Colombia to which bilateral relationships would be fundamental. I consider it also to be fairly interesting to ponder, why Colombia maintained its representation in Finland almost 10 years after the closure of the Finnish Embassy in Bogotá, but this could be explained purely with the desire to have a large net of mission abroad<sup>90</sup> as well as the historically lucrative coffee trade.

In the 2000 development aid had a growing significance in the Finnish foreign policy and human rights have had a high profile within the framework of this sector (Pyhälä, 2016, p. 359). The election of Martti Ahtisaari as the President of the country and his involvement in the Kosovo peace process brought peacebuilding on the agenda of the Finnish diplomacy in the new way.<sup>91</sup> Even if Uribe's Colombia did not present an ideal partner for official bilateral relationship<sup>92</sup>, there were still projects in which Finland was involved. Aid had become important in the Finnish Colombian relationship: Colombia was, alongside of Haiti, the country in Latin America that received most development aid from Finland between the years of 2004 and 2014 (ibid. p. 352). During this time Finnish experts such as Helena Ranta,<sup>93</sup> an odontologist and forensic dentist worked in Colombia in projects helping to identify the victims of the armed conflict (Pyhälä, 2018). On top becoming *país amigo* in 2001, Finland also started to finance the peace initiatives of Francisco de Roux<sup>94</sup>.

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<sup>89</sup> "Todo por un ajuste fiscal que teníamos y pues en lo recorte siempre los Ministerios de Relaciones llevan las de perder porque como los presupuestos están dados en diferentes divisas, distintas al peso, cuando se convierten las divisas a pesos pues eso da unas cifras astronómicas y entonces todo el mundo dice "Uy pero qué cantidad de plata!" (Benavides Cotes, 2018).

<sup>90</sup> As the country's foreign policy was traditionally based on the multilateralism and cooperation in international institutions.

<sup>91</sup> For more information on the Finnish involvement in the Kosovo peace process, see e.g. Suominen & Karvinen, 2008.

<sup>92</sup> This can be read between the lines of several sources, such as Pärssinen 2006 or Pyhänen, 2019.

<sup>93</sup> Ranta worked in Colombia in 2007 (Ranta, 2012)

<sup>94</sup> Currently the head of the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition within the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia, previously the head of Program for Development and Peace in the Magdalena Medio. de Roux also participated in both



It is interesting to consider that the Colombian government judged that there was not enough trade with Finland to justify the existence of an Embassy in 2002 because from the Finnish side the situation was the opposite just a few years later. The years 2005 and 2006 were records years for Finnish exports to Colombia, mainly due to large projects in which Finnish companies were involved in, most importantly the port of Cartagena<sup>95</sup> to which Finnish companies provided the whole machinery (Finnish Embassy in Bogota, 2018).

Even if the Uribe's administration was officially not ready to negotiate with the leftist guerrilla groups,<sup>96</sup> it did start open talks with the largest paramilitary group, United Self-Defence Group of Colombia (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, AUC). AUC and other paramilitary groups were in fact responsible for the majority of the violations of international humanitarian law committed in Colombia between 1994 and 2002 (Arnson, 2006 p. 1 & 2).<sup>97</sup> The peace agreement was reached in 2002 and the paramilitary troops demobilized in 2004. This was a great advance in the peace process of Colombia, taking one armed group off the table and thus relieving the cross-pressure in which the civilian population was living in in the rural areas of the country.<sup>98</sup>

As part of the peace process, Colombia continued to work with the international community even if the government's focus seemed to have somewhat shifted; it was wary of too much participation in deciding the details of the process whilst still seeking especially international financial help in resolving the conflict (Santos

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symposiums on the Colombian peace process organised in the University of Helsinki in 2001 and 2006.

<sup>95</sup> Because of its strategic location, Cartagena is the biggest port in Colombia and one of the largest in South America connecting to 750 other ports in 150 countries around the world and handling 60% of the bilateral trade with United States. It's also one of the most modern and technologically advanced ports in Latin America (Puerto de Cartagena, 2018).

<sup>96</sup> As, according to the Vice-President, *para bailar se necesita dos*, or it takes two to tango, and the guerrillas were not willing to negotiate (Santos Calderón, 2005).

<sup>97</sup> One of the reasons for this was the habit of "purging" the claimed territories of suspected FARC sympathizers, which lead into massacres and tortures (For more details, see e.g. Arnson et al, 2005).

<sup>98</sup> There was, however, controversy about this process internationally and nationally as the paramilitaries had operated in collaboration with the army against the guerrilla and thus considered themselves patriotic heroes refusing to recognise any need for punishment for their activities. The government's decision to indeed let many of the leaders reintegrate in the society without jail time or extradition to the United States to response to drug charges against them sparked controversy (Arnson, 2006. p. 5-6)

Calderón, 2005, p. 85). As a result, these years also saw high-level visits to Finland when Vice-President Francisco Santos Calderón and Defence Minister Jorge Uribe visited the country to participate in a colloquium organised in the University of Helsinki by the Iberoamerican Centre, Foreign Ministry of Finland and the Embassy of Colombia in Sweden<sup>99</sup> about the peace process. The European Union was represented by Markus Lyra, the sub secretary of state of Finland, and Roberto Mora, the High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia attended as well (Pärssinen & Lammila, 2006, p. 7-8). An interesting detail too is to note that the current Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Carlos Holmes Trujillo (then Ambassador of Colombia in Sweden), participated in the organisation of the symposium

Another Colombian Ministerial visit took place later in the same year as the Minister of Education Cecilia Maria Velez, visited the country. She returned the next year and bilateral mechanism of political consultations was started in 2006 in Helsinki. These consultations are meetings, during which the agenda for bilateral and multilateral issues is revised and discussed. They are held, in theory, every two years by alternating the hosting between the two countries. Information about relevant issues in multilateral organizations is shared as well as hopes and expectations for the future of the bilateral relationship (Benavides, 2018).

The bilateral mechanism has seemed to work quite well and the relationship between the countries has stayed quite active also behind the scenes even without direct representation. According to Pyhälä (2018), the multilateral organizations such as the UN have had special importance in the Finno-Colombian relationship and the countries have supported each other's candidates for several different positions in UN committees. During his term as an ambassador accredited to Colombia in 2006-2011 there was also active talks about the re-establishing the missions. Neither were the Colombian ministers the only ones making official visits during this decade: the Finnish Sub Secretaries of state Markus Lyra and Pekka Huhtaniemi visited Colombia in 2007 and 2009 and in 2009 Huhtaniemi accompanied the Minister of Environment Paula Lehtomäki during her visit.

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<sup>99</sup> The first colloquium on this topic was organised by the same actors in 2001 when Finland was still not officially vinculated with the Colombian peace process.

It is somewhat interesting to consider that the period during which there was no direct representation from either country, was simultaneously the most active one for Ministerial visits. Even though it could be argued, that the official foreign policies of the countries did not complement each other during this time, in reality there had never been so many high level Colombian visits to Finland, even during the seemingly active 80's and 90's. Finland's participation in the Colombian peace process as well as the creation of the mechanism for political consultation were important steps in strengthening the connection between the countries. Even if the economic potential of the relationship had not been as lucrative as it was once hoped, it seemed that both countries genuinely had something interesting to offer to each other: Finland saw potential in the markets of a developing country and Colombia had interest towards the Finnish expertise especially in post-conflict, education and technology.

The first decade of 2000 had indeed launched Finland to global fame in technology and education. As Nokia had become one of the leading manufacturers of mobile phones in the world, it also contributing massively to the economic development of the country: in 2000 the company was responsible of 4% of the GDP of Finland and towards the end of the decade, it still provided almost 25% of the growth of the GDP<sup>100</sup> (Yle, 2009). This created statistics that showed that the Finnish economy was growing faster than any other economy in the world (Uusi Suomi, 2011). Simultaneously Finland had become a top scoring nation in PISA tests; in 2000 the Finnish students scored first in reading and in 2003 reading and mathematics continuing reaching top places all through the 2000's (Ministry for Education and Culture).

The Colombian Minister of Communication, Maria del Rosario Guerra de la Espriella, also visited Finland with a commercial delegation in 2008, around the time when Colombia was adopting the European standard for mobile phones (Pyhälä 2018). Nokia was a big actor in the projects and the Minister was received in Finland by Honorary Consul Antero Pajari.

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<sup>100</sup> Gross domestic product, a monetary measure of the market value of all goods and services produced

## 4.7 2010 onwards: Politics without coffee?

The economic crisis of 2008<sup>101</sup> caused global shockwaves which also affected both Finland and Colombia in similar ways: because of the reduced buying potential of the countries to which products were exported, both countries saw lower level of production which, in turn, lead into unemployment and diminishing of GDP<sup>102</sup>. Finland was particularly badly affected, especially as the end of the decade also saw the downturn of the success of Nokia.<sup>103</sup> This larger economic development affected the Foreign Ministry as well and, as happened during the recession of the 1990's, Finland closed several of its diplomatic missions abroad (Ulkoministeriö, 2010). One of the missions closed was Venezuela and thus the Colombian affairs were once again handled by the Embassy of Colombia in Peru from 2011 onwards. It should be noted, however, that according to ambassador emeritus Pyhälä (2018), the discussion about reopening the Embassies between the countries was already being discussed at the start of the decade.<sup>104</sup>

In 2010 Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, who had previously held various Ministerial positions, was elected as the President of Colombia. Already by 2011 the new government started hold exploratory meetings with FARC about possible peace negotiations (Semana, 1.11.2012). The meetings continued in secrecy to 2012 in one of the guarantor countries, Cuba, which had also hosted previous encounters between the two parties during the Pastrana era. Norway was chosen as other guarantor countries whilst Chile and Venezuela were chosen as 'accompanying countries' or facilitators. The meetings in Havana continued throughout the year and did not become public knowledge until August, when the previous president Uribe revealed that the government was participating in the negotiations (El Tiempo, 19.8.2012). In September President Santos announced the signing of the General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and

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<sup>101</sup> Caused originally by the banking crisis in the United States after the overheating of the economy leading into distrust and avoidance of lending between the banks which then caused collapse of several institutions (Amadeo, 2018). The crisis then spread and became global.

<sup>102</sup> In case of Finland, see for example Taloussanomat 2011, for Colombia Buitrago, 2009.

<sup>103</sup> See for example, Doz & Wilson 2017

<sup>104</sup> "No, jo, jo vuonna 2011, ennen ku mä palasin Suomeen ja ennen ku mä lopetin Bogotassa, niin mä useita kertoja keskustelin Kolumbian ulkoministerin Maria Angela Holguínin kanssa siitä, että perustettaisiin molemmat vastavuorosesti suurlähetystöt. Ja hänen piti tulla Suomeenkin keskustelemaan siitä, mut sit hänellä oli niin paljon muita kiireitä ettei hän koskaan ehtiny,"

Lasting Peace (*Acuerdo General para la terminación del conflicto y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera*). Despite several challenges during the negotiations such as kidnappings and confrontations leading to deaths on both sides,<sup>105</sup> the dialogue continued for three years until 2015, when Special Jurisdiction for Peace or (*Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz*) was announced.

Despite the fact that Finland was not part of these historic peace negotiations, the Finno-Colombian relationship took steps forward on the economic front. The European Union signed a free trade agreement with Colombia and Peru in 2012<sup>106</sup>, which entered in force in 2013. The same year also saw another Ministerial visit from Finland to Colombia when Minister for Foreign Trade and European Affairs of Finland Alexander Stubb visited the country. The Minister for Foreign Affairs Erkki Tuomioja followed suit the next year. The bilateral political consultations were also advancing, and the second meeting was held in Helsinki in 2011. It is also worth noting that, perhaps for the first time in history, the trade balance between the countries had turned to be favourable for Finland: according to Jokelainen (2015) Colombia exported products worth 62 million euros in 2012 whilst the Finnish exports totalled 81 million euros.

During the trade promoting visit with the delegation of the newly established Team Finland<sup>107</sup> Minister Stubb stated that Colombia was a growing market in which “economic growth, the calmed down security situation and amiability to investors were some of the reasons why [...] Finland has lifted Colombia back to its list of priorities” (Embassy of Finland in Lima, 2013b).

It is then, clear that Finland had strong increasing interest in Colombia, as is also demonstrated in the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs’ Plan of Action for Latin America and Caribbean of 2013:

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<sup>105</sup> See, for example, FARC-EP 2013

<sup>106</sup> This agreement was based on a Framework Cooperation Agreement between the Andean Community and European Commission signed in 1993 and which entered in force 1998. The Free Trade Agreements were later negotiated individually with members of the Andean Community (SICE).

<sup>107</sup> Team Finland is a network of organisations operating in teams in over 70 countries and bringing together the Finnish officials, publicly funded organisations and other central “Finland-actors” in each region. Each team is headed by the Ambassador (Embassy of Finland in Lima, 2013).

*“The political and economic relationship between Finland and Colombia have a lot of unused potential. There is an intention to strengthen and deepen the political contact. The trade between the countries has been stable but can be increased in volume and diversified in structure. For example, in the field of forestry, mining and infrastructure Finland still has unused opportunities. On these sectors in 38 projects there has been disputes over land and human rights issues, which should be taken into consideration. Colombia participates in the cooperation between Finland and the Andean region<sup>108</sup> in which especially the environment sector is central focus” (Ulkoministeriö, 2013).<sup>109</sup>*

This intention to “deepen and strengthen the political contact” was realised during the same year by opening a Contact office for Bogota under the Embassy in Lima. The only reason why Finland did not directly open an Embassy in Bogotá was the fact that the Foreign Ministry was still not allowed to open new missions after the 2011 reduction and the opening of a new Embassy would not have been approved by the Parliament (Pyhälä, 2018).<sup>110</sup> Because of this, the Colombian representation was opened as a side office for the Embassy in Peru.

The interest was, however, mutual and Colombia did take the step of reopening the Embassy in Helsinki. Fulvia Elvira Benavides was named as Chargé d’Affaires e.p. and she travelled to Finland in 2013 to reopen the mission. According to her, the Colombian interest to re-establish the representation in Finland was due to the fact that the country wanted to strengthen its relationship with the Nordic countries as it was working towards the peace agreement. For Colombians, she states (2018), the Nordic countries have a high profile in international peacebuilding and post-conflict

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<sup>108</sup> This cooperation was mainly in forms of development projects in the Andean region in 2010-2016. These projects were organised in Peru, Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador in the fields of biodiversity, energy and environment, forestry and hydrometeorology to promote renewable energies and clean technologies as well as energy efficiency in the region (Embassy of Finland in Lima, 2016).

<sup>109</sup> ”Suomalaisyrietykset ovat toimineet etenkin metsä- ja elektroniikkateollisuuden, energiateknologian, meteorologian ja satamalogistiikan aloilla. Muun muassa metsä-, kaivos- ja infrastruktuurialoilla Suomella on vielä hyödyntämättömiä mahdollisuuksia. Näiden sektoreiden 38 hankkeisiin on kuitenkin liittynyt maanomistuskisoja ja ihmisoikeusongelmia, mikä tulee ottaa huomioon. Kolumbia on mukana Suomen ja Andien alueen välisessä yhteistyössä, jossa etenkin ympäristöala on keskeisesti esillä.”

<sup>110</sup> ”Ja syy siihen miksei ollu suurlähetystö oli ainoastaan se, että Eduskunta ei ois hyväksynyt sen nimittämistä, sen kutsumista suurlähetystöksi”

reconstruction and, because of this, President Santos had identified Finland and as an embassy to be reopened.<sup>111</sup>

High level visits have become almost a yearly occurrence between the countries in the 2010's. Although travelling as a civilian the former President of Finland Tarja Halonen visited Colombia in 2015 and, in 2016, the Colombian Minister for Foreign Affairs Patti Lodoño visited Helsinki when the third round of the bilateral consultation was held. Under Secretary of State (Vice Minister) of Internal and External Services of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pirkko Hämäläinen visited Colombia later that year (Embajada de Colombia en Finlandia, 2018).

The long-awaited step to also reopen the Finnish Embassy after almost 25 years of absence was finally taken in 2017. Prime Minister Juha Sipilä travelled to Bogotá in October to inaugurate the new mission and Ambassador Jarmo Kuuttila was named the Ambassador of Finland in Colombia. A business delegation travelled with the Prime Minister and Chargé d'Affaires Benavides also attended the ceremony alongside the Foreign Minister Patti Lodoño. Minister Sipilä met with the President Santos and several joint projects were discussed, especially in education, forestry and environment and cyber security (Benavides, 2018).

## 5.8 The future

When looking at the future of the Finno-Colombian relations, it could be stated that there seems to be a great deal of interest in developing the relationship from both sides and this creates high hopes for the future. The opening of the embassies has created an irreplaceable bilateral canal through which the countries can advance their rapprochement on all levels. And this, in turn, will no doubt contribute to the level of interest and the commitment the countries have towards each other.

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<sup>111</sup> “Y tenía también en la mirada... aunque no era público todavía el tema de las negociaciones de paz. Y en esa medida siempre se ha considerado que los países nórdicos han sido... como... uno grandes apoyos en la construcción de... cultura de paz y de... solución de conflictos y por eso, tal vez, Finlandia también se miró como un... es uno de los nórdicos que podría también contribuir.”

Even though there was diplomatic representation in the past, the situation is very different today than it was in the 80's and 90's. As Finland's foreign policy profile has shifted away from neutral, purely commercial politics towards playing a bigger role in crisis management as well as conflict resolution and human rights issues and Colombia is a country in which the society is undergoing a certain level of reconstruction as a part of a post-conflict process, there seem to be logical connection between the two countries which did not exist the last time both had mutual representation. Equally, Finland is now part of the European Union which has funded different projects in Colombia through loans from the European Bank, as well as signed free trade agreement and a visa waiver programme with Colombia. This would give reason to think, that currently the two countries have more potential in their bilateral relations than perhaps ever before.

Naturally, there is still great focus on the economical aspect of the bilateral relations, and, according to Benavides (2018):

*"The fact that in both countries there is an embassy is a factor that contributes to the entrepreneurs, both Colombians and Finns, feel a greater, as, institutional support to advance in a few business issues. It is not easy, because they are very distant countries but where there are some interests in some fields where you can see an important contribution in both ways. Both Colombian products here and science and technology from Finland to Colombia. So ... I do hope that this process that we begin to return to have embassies both countries ... of high-level visits ... let's say that the road is easier to go forward. I would think [the relations] will continue to grow. That is why, because we have ... let us say that in both ways the needs have been identified. And that is an important step. Knowing what we want from here to there and from there to here."*<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> "El hecho de que en ambos países haya embajada es un factor que contribuye a que los empresarios, tanto colombianos como finlandeses, sientan un mayor, como, un respaldo institucional para avanzar en unos temas de negocios. No es fácil, porque son países muy distantes, pero donde hay unos intereses que... en los que se... y unos campos donde pueda ver una contribución importante en ambas vías. Tanto de productos colombianos acá como de ciencia y tecnología de Finlandia hacía Colombia. Entonces... yo sí espero que este proceso que iniciamos de volver a tener embajadas ambos países... de las visitas de alto nivel... digamos contribuyan que a el camino sea más fácil de recorrer en adelante. [...] Yo pensaría que van a continuar creciendo. Por eso, porque



The Ambassador emeritus Pyhälä's (2018) comment is also very optimistic:

*"I would say that the situation is very opportune. I do not see any reason why [the relationship] could not progress in a very positive manner. And the weight of the violence in the 90's which contributed to the hesitation on the Finnish side does not exist anymore. And Colombia and Colombians, as far as I see, are reliable. I would say it is easy to negotiate with Colombians, they are very friendly so there should not be any kind of problems."*<sup>113</sup>

If the year 2018 was still setting up for the diplomatic Mission in Bogotá, there are some great plans and projects already in place. Colombia has been especially active in cultural exchange and in 2018 Finland was selected as one of the destinations for the Foreign Ministry's programme in which children from the worst affected areas by the conflict get to become the ambassadors of their country abroad through music and sports. A group of young people came to visit the Finnish capital and a similar visit is planned for the year in course. The bilateral consultations were held in Bogotá in late 2018 and currently there are plans for bilateral agreements. Equally, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia, Carlos Holmes Trujillo, became the first Colombian Foreign Minister to visit Finland in March 2019, creating a huge positive mile-stone for the progress and growth of the bilateral relationship. During his visit he also announce that the Colombian Embassy in Finland would be raised to the category of a Mission lead by an Ambassador instead of Chargé d'Affaires demonstrating that bilateral relationship is indeed on a higher level than even before.

## 6. Conclusions

It can be stated that through the narrative approach we can clearly see the larger foreign policy tendencies of each country reflected through the context bilateral

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*ha... hemos... digamos que en ambas vías se ha identificado las necesidades. Y eso es un paso importante. Saber qué queremos de aquí para allá y de allá para acá."*

<sup>113</sup> "No mä sanoisin että... että tilanne on hyvin otollinen. Et tuota... En näe mitään estettä etteikö ne vois kehittyä hyvin positiivisesti. Ja se... tuota se painolasti mikä, mitä 90-luvun väkivaltaset olot vaikutti Suomen niinku empimiseen silloin niin silloin... niin sitä tilannetta ei enää ole. Ja että Kolumbia... Nähdäkseni kolumbialaiset on luotettavia. [...] mä sanoisin että kolumbialaisten kanssa on helppo neuvotella. Ovat hyvin ystävällisiä että ei... ei pitäis olla minkäänlaisia ongelmia."

relationship. In this sense, as the variety of sources were used to create a chronological sequence and narrative of events with smaller details of the Finno-Colombian relationship, this method creates a cohesive historical arch for both countries.

When answering the question on how well the bilateral relationship analysed reflect the official historical narrative of foreign policy, it can be stated that in their beginning, the Finno-Colombian relationships seem to reflect this narrative; when the official contact was established both countries were looking to expand their foreign relations especially through trade. However, from the 1960 onwards despite Colombia's official desire to create bilateral agreements, the reality of the unbalanced trade with Finland and the Finnish difficulties in obtaining importing licenses represent a rupture between the official narrative and the practical foreign trade policy choices. Finland's several attempts to keep the trade going and advance the relations with e.g. ministerial visits despite the difficulties seem to be in line with the country's official foreign policy at the time.

Even though the 1970's continued with the same tendencies, the presidential visit of 1979 and the following establishment of mixed commission gave indications that Colombia wished to put the liberal free trade policy in practice. When the embassies were opened in the following years, there was real indication that these steps could have potentially helped the bilateral trade relation to grow to its full potential. However, as the internal conflict in Colombia escalated, this could eventually not be. The recession in Finland forced the country to reduce its foreign missions and as the European integration reached Finland, the bilateral relationship between the distant coffee partners seemed to have become secondary to both countries

In political development, it should be noted, that during its history despite its official narrative of liberal foreign policy, Colombia has been more inclined to power politics and ideas more associated with realism such as rejecting international community and law when they have been at odds with ideas of self-help (see examples of accusations of human rights violations during the presidency of Turbay & Uribe). Even though Colombia does at least superficially commit to the principles of the liberal world order, this has not always been reflected in the country's values or internal policies.

Despite the realism tendencies of Samper's and especially Uribe's administrations, Colombia has been committed to the international organisations such as the UN and the OAS. This demonstrates that at least on the surface, the country has abided to the ethics of this side of the liberal politics. This has not always been the case with free market policies however, as the Colombian economy has gone through periods of strong protectionism which has also affected its relationship with Finland as the bilateral trade was the major uniting factor before the year 2000.

Finland on the other hand has always underlined the importance of liberal world order, including free trade, and aimed to stay away from power politics. It could be argued, that the decades of Finlandization represented the time during which Finland was forced to adapt its practical policy choices to the realism of bipolar Cold War world order, but despite of this, at least on the surface, the country always intended to maintain bilateral relationship with both sides of the conflict as well as participate in multilateral organizations. After the 1990's this principle has been clearly demonstrated also in the practical policy choices and actions, especially as part of the European Union.

On the Colombian side, another important tendency to note is that since at least the 1950's Colombia's public offices have functioned with little continuation as each incoming Minister (and President) "shakes a governmental agency from top to bottom" creating a situation in which the plans and objectives of the previous administration are largely abandoned (see e.g. Hunter, 1962 p. 23). This has been less so the case in Finland, where political consensus and continuity have been more typical political trends. In Colombia, the lack of continuity seems to have made it difficult to create long term plans of commercial cooperation as can be seen clearly with the complications in obtaining import licences for the Finnish products in the 1970's and 80's; despite the best promises, concrete actions were lacking perhaps because of the next administration's policy choices. It could also be stated that Finland, as many other countries, were victims of bad timing when trying to enter the Colombian market in full force.

Even though there are European countries with which Colombia has very strong relationship due to historic reasons, especially Spain and France (Benavides, 2018) and sometimes it seems that it is hard to shift the country's focus away from those countries on the European continent and even harder to take it away from the country up to the North, that is to say, the United States. Even with this being the case, Finland seem to have gained its place on the Colombian vision. From the Finnish perspective, Colombia is still relatively unknown, even in the Latin American context. However, there are many fields in which Finland would have much to offer to Colombia (ibid.) and the post-conflict Colombia offers interesting business opportunities for Finland.

From the 2000 onwards, it could be stated that Finno-Colombian relationship offer a fairly consistent practical demonstration of the political narrative of the foreign policy of both countries; Finland has been involved in the Colombian peace process from the 2001 onwards (see e.g. Feodorow, 2001) and both countries have maintained the diplomatic and commercial relationship with several Ministerial visits with business delegations as well as mutual cooperation in multilateral organisations. It is worth mentioning, that Finland has seemed to be more active in maintaining the contact between the countries with higher number of ministerial visits as well as the fact that the Finnish embassy has always been headed by an ambassador, whilst Colombia has operated its Mission in Finland under a chargé d'affaires. Despite of this, the reopening of the Embassies in 2010's could be seen as the reaffirmation of both countries' commitment to extensive bilateral collaboration with other democratic states.

The future of the relationship also looks very positive. The diplomatic representation of the two countries has never been on such high level as it is right now, with both countries (soon) having a permanent Mission lead by a resident Ambassador and the relationship advancing especially with bilateral visits as well as agreements. The commercial aspects of the relationship seem to also be moving forwards, thanks to the more stable political and economic conditions of Colombia and active work done by representatives of both countries. Even if the trade balance is still favourable to

Colombia,<sup>114</sup> the relationship has changed and grown from its last peak in the 1980's. It seems like in the future, the bilateral relationship can be based on more than just coffee, and that Finland and Colombia might not be such distant partners after all.

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<sup>114</sup> See, Tulli, 2018.

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## Interviews

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Antero Pajari, the Honorary Consul of Colombia in Finland, conducted 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2018, Helsinki.

H.E. Ambassador Emeritus Mikko Pyhälä, conducted 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2018, Helsinki.